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Personality of the Journalist, a Modern Issue in Our Area

No matter how often people write about transforming the State Company “Teleradio-Moldova” into a public institution, every time the following impediments are mentioned: the interference of authorities, obedience of managers, imperfect legislation, and the incompetence of some members of the Broadcasting Coordinating Council or of the Observers Council of the Public company “TRM”. I do not know why, but they never mention the professional ethics of journalists, their behavior, competences, and personalities.

In other words those who write about TRM never go down to the floors of journalists’ domain, where this phenomenon really takes place. But namely here exist the main obstacles which impede the mass media of Moldova from becoming really independent and objective. Revenge tactics, obedient servicing, and nepotism as an editorial policy have marked out mass media in the Republic of Moldova, giving it an old-fashioned appearance, with an Asian shade called simply “provincialism”.

Today it is much easier to criticize the Presidency and Mr. Voronin, the Government and Mr. Tarlev, or the deputies from the factions we dislike than to do so with the medium and low level functionaries, who have the impertinence and dexterity to deceive, to make small gifts that journalists can’t refuse. Some journalists do not analyze thoroughly the authorities’ activities, yet claim their “criticism” is an act of heroism, although it is not like that in Moldova. Today it has become a courageous deed to objectively and critically evaluate the evolution of journalism, a domain where you know all the people, where you have friends.

Some former heads of radio and television from Eastern and Central Europe and international experts have mentioned that since the laws on broadcasting and public institution were adopted, the biggest obstacle in the process of transformation has been the personnel, who tackle the new reality with an old way of thinking and stale principles. Such a journalist goes to a production only if he is invited and after the show he waits for small gifts from the person he dedicated his program to.

Talking about the servility and conformity of telejournalists (and not only them), we need to mention their local pattern. It is not about political attachment, a notion that is widely spread in our area; it is about the attachment to people, enterprises, government offices and ministries. Watching the news or

other programs on the “Moldova 1” channel on a regular basis you can guess who the authors of reports are by looking at the topics and approaches. For example, who will interview Mr. Popușoi from “Moldsilva” on a hillside of Soroca, who will film in Porumbeni or at the railway station, or who will make public a spree of journalists, etc? Because of plentiful reports of this kind and occasional guests, our television cannot overcome the state of being a provincial institution, and has become the hostage of the mercantile interests of telejournalists and of the TRM management’s servility towards the political authorities.

Broadcasts are often forms of exchange or thank you gestures for the services from which some employees benefit. If a make-up artist or hair stylist has been invited to the show, it is almost sure the presenter or the stage-director uses his or her services for hairdressing or make-up. It is the same in the case of high schools or kindergartens that appear on TV-screens. At one of the internal meetings, a former president of the Company made a joke: he knew about the stage of construction of the journalist’s house from the enterprise profiles he was reporting on. This sad joke was true.

The journalist’s inconsistency, vulnerability and lack of resistance to some material goods, often of a ridiculous value, has been recognized and taken advantage of by officials, businessmen, and people who play games with the public opinion. The undersigned organized a meeting with journalists from ten Balkan states about six years ago. The former mayor general of Chisinau, who was also present, mentioned in the context of some protests against the location of certain shops, terraces, and schools in the districts of the city, that our journalists cooperate with those fighting to exclude competitors in exchange for a bottle of champagne, a box of chocolate or a bottle of perfume.

Do not think that reporters from other television channels in Moldova, who proclaim themselves independent or pro-European, are more “catholic”. Some time ago I was in the “Dinamo” market in the district I live in, when everybody was saying a filming team from an independent television channel was arriving. I was surprised by the scene that followed. A man started to teach the saleswomen what to say – one in Romanian, the other one in Russian, a lady called her friends from home, so they played the buyers. The purpose of the reports was to prevent the municipal administration from implementing a decision to liquidate the market. It is strange that this reporter, called independent, did not notice that all the advertising in this market was in a foreign language, that a significant part of merchandise

came from smuggling, that the prices were not marked, that the products sold did not have a certificate of origin or explanation in the official language and that cash registers with memories of financial transactions were not used. The reporters from this “independent” channel manipulated public opinion in a similar way for a few months, sustaining the street salespeople from the central market and giving the impression that they incited the latter to organize street demonstrations.

When a journalist with a European way of thinking writes about services (including drivers or salespeople), he or she places fiscal discipline and consumer protection first. When you defend employment, but you do not notice that dairy products, cleansing agents, fruit and lingerie are sold at the same table in the street, that scales are not accurate, that there are no booths to try on clothes, and that the salesperson does not give you a business card in case you need to complain – all these indicate that the reporters are executing somebody's order, playing somebody's game...

How can Moldovan journalists overcome this sickness of servility?

First of all, and this has already been written about, journalists should be better paid, in order to make them less vulnerable to influence and external pressures.

Secondly, this professional aspect, specific for our area, should be studied at the University, debated in editorial meetings, at different seminars and courses. Journalists and reporters need to be aware of the danger of servility, nepotism and lack of personality. They should avoid making reports in

domains or localities where they have obligations, friends, relatives and where they could not be objective and judicial. Editors and producers should know their subordinates well, their strengths and weaknesses, and shield them from compromising situations. Administrators should transfer personnel horizontally every 5-6 years, which is good for journalists.

Many TV channels solve these issues of personnel and editorial policy by developing and enforcing a code of ethics. A morality Talmud is currently being prepared at the Moldovan Television TRM, but it is a little too extensive to be remembered and applied.

When I visited the public channel “ZDF” in Germany, an employee told me their Board of Directors is a precise copy of the Parliament, but this fact does not compromise the channel's independence and the journalists' objectivity, because no one accepts a conclusion or a viewpoint being imposed.

It is true that our Broadcasting Coordinating Council, the Observers Council and the administration of “Teleradio-Moldova” were created and will depend on the authorities, although they could have implemented the directions coming from the authorities in a more difficult way, if there were more journalists with stamina and personality. It seldom happens that a journalist resigns, defending his/her moral beliefs and principles.

It will be a long time until objectivity, a sense of decency, principles and firmness become the doctrine of every journalist in Moldova.

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Patterns of Quality Journalism

Journalism is an Occupation that Sometimes Makes One Starve to Death and Sometimes Annoys or Bore Others.

When the young man Gabriel Garcia Marquez told his mother he decided to become a journalist, she watched him with a mixture of reproach and indulgence and said: “There are other better occupations for you to starve to death”.¹ But he did not starve. He was first of all a good reporter for “El Spectador”, and is an exceptional writer (Nobel Prize for Literature, 1982). He probably lives today in a beautiful house made of pink brick, with doves on the roof – symbols of welfare. Rather than the opposite, Marquez remains if not a unique case, then at least one of the rare cases, when quality journalism brings money and celebrity.

Marquez did not starve to death, but many other journalists and literates pass away hungry. One can find more examples, in

our media and linguistic circles as well, when some reporters really starve to death – and this is not a metaphor. If they do not starve, then they die because of excessive drinking. Others have to quit their job or become dishonest or change their profession in order to earn their living. Furthermore, there are still people who value the status and the definition of journalism nowadays, suggested by a short sentence on the written strip of an advertising spot that celebrates, at the end of 2005, ten years of ProTV – a president apologized to donkeys for comparing them with journalists.

Despite the ironies, accusations and disregard for mass-media and the people who create it, I strongly believe journalism is the best profession in the world. I will explain this with ordinary words. I first thought about sports reporters, who, for example, watch a football game due to professional interest and are present at the stadiums most of the time having fun, not just out of obligation. And if we compare their status with the status of policemen, who

1. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Living to Tell the Tale*, RAO, Bucharest, 2004.

preserve order and protect reporters by watching the fans and keeping their backs to a Zidane or Ronaldo, while reporters face the stars and can even ask them questions at press conferences or in airports, I would say it is better to be a journalist. Unlike trolleybus drivers, journalists can stop where and when they like in their fascinating or risky trips in order to find answers to questions. Journalists are not accountants: they receive money, they do not give money. And I can continue with comparisons.

“Big Ideas, More Than Nice Words, Make the Text Superior”

One day I asked my younger colleagues, who are students at the Department of Journalism and Communications, what important qualities a journalist should have in order to be successful in his or her career. Patience, said Tatiana as I remember. To be able to communicate well, added Viorica. Svetlana claimed: originality. Imagination, complemented Sandu. Some other qualities were further mentioned by the other students of the course “Journalism for Human Development”.

I read to them from a book almost the complete list. We admitted that one of the most interesting definitions that would flatter all of us to be defined as journalists belongs to Curtis D. MacDougall. “The successful journalist is not born. He is made. Most of the qualities are good in all domains. Intelligence, friendliness, trustworthiness, imagination, ingenuity, vitality, rapidity, accuracy, courage, strength, self-discipline, perseverance, intellectual liveliness, honesty, punctuality, optimism, the power of observation, sharpness, initiative, humor, adaptability. The journalist cannot be limited to the capacity to write. Big ideas, more than nice words, make the text superior. The reporter should be inquisitive, receptive and skeptic”.

Where can I find the words that express my colleagues’ reaction when I looked up to watch them? To tell you the truth, I added a personal observation: “And for all these qualities which I help you to develop, you usually do not get paid by our local press”.

And not only in our country. When the young Santiago Zavala, the central character in the novel: “Conversation in the Cathedral” by Mario Vargas Llosa came to get a job at the newspaper “Chronicle”, the chief of the News Department, Mr. Vallejo, told him discouragingly: “Journalism is the worst paid job. And the one that sours your life worst of all”.²

When Ethics Ends, Journalists Cease to Be Journalists

Many times, opposite qualities are rewarded instead – the antonyms of the robot-portrait of the journalist, defined by Curtis D. MacDougall. Why? One of the answers would be that money in mass media comes from political circles or the business world, which confuse journalism with ideology and

press releases with propaganda. But partly to blame for that are the media professionals that do not have the same understanding of what is allowed in our profession and what you cannot do under any circumstances. And if people from political circles and the business world read examples of wretchedness written by journalists about untruthful things and people, it means they can ask them to do it. So they pay for nice words, not for big ideas.

There is a regulation called *ethics* for such situations. In a journalism workshop organized in July 2005 in the Republic of Moldova, Arjum Wajid, who works for BBC and MediaWise, an organization from Great Britain offering counseling, research and training in mass-media ethics, made a significant observation: “When ethics ends, the people cease to be people and the journalists cease to be journalists”. But different people understand differently even the same word, such as “ethics” or “mercenary activities.”

If being a mercenary means to be paid well for a job well-done within the professional regulations that we can also call ethics, then it is OK. “I am sure that writing should be paid as well as the builder’s work and that if the type setters are paid well and in time, then I am even more entitled to think the journalists should be paid well too”, mentions Garcia Marquez in his memoirs.

I ask myself why women in the market can confer to maintain their prices, yet journalists are ashamed, feel inconvenienced or lack imagination to do the same within their craft as news and image sellers? There is a long way to go until such an agreement and communication for everybody’s benefit is attained, in as much as journalists do not even greet each other when they meet.

If a mercenary is a person who renders services for payment, it means everybody in this world is a mercenary, including Zidane and Ronaldo, of course; the policemen who stand with their backs to them; the trolleybus driver who still feels comfortable in his cabin; but not the journalist who enters the crowded room and rushes to the match he will watch in the stadium, not having to pay. But he will not have two lei at the end of the match in order to go home by maxi-taxi and will go back home by trolleybus again. Or the accountants, who probably have a bigger salary than that of the policemen, trolleybus drivers or journalists.

After all, everything is a matter of choice. Either you develop and use within your professional life those more than twenty qualities of the successful journalist mentioned by Curtis D. MacDougall and risk not being gratified by them, or you make propaganda by using fewer than those twenty qualities and have more chances to prosper. Or you change your profession.

If you say like the Little Prince, “I saw a beautiful house made of rosy brick, with geraniums in the windows and doves on the roof”, it is your choice to say that, being conscious that no one will understand or pay you for that. But if you say, “I saw a house that cost one thousand francs”, you will hear immediately exclamations: “Oh, what a pretty house that is!” and you will be generously paid.

2. Mario Vargas Llosa, *Conversation in the Cathedral*, Bucharest, RAO, 1998.

Vlad BERCU

Journalists' trade union: to be or not to be

To Be or Not to Be?

It seems that the question is different if we speak about creating the journalists' trade union. In theory, but also at the practical level.

Over 70 per cent of the participants in polls within the last five years unanimously think it is necessary to create a trade union of press employees. Others are even more explicit: they think the creation of such a trade union is very much delayed. It is an issue that should have been solved yesterday or even the day before yesterday. The issue has been discussed in the last three conferences of the Journalists Union. They even created a commission. There existed a few versions of the statute. The last one was developed in autumn of 2005 by the Association of Economic Journalists and Committee for Freedom of the Press within an extensive project sustained by Eurasia Foundation.

Those who go "against the current" are too few

At the theoretical level, but also in practice, the idea is supported with no certain reservations. Things get complicated, though, when they turn from theory to practice. The number of skeptics increases, as well as the number of those who contemplate the movement, but do not take part in it. Almost nothing goes well.

I mentioned on other occasions that nine months ago, when the idea to create the Journalists syndicate appeared, I was much more optimistic than I am now. I went along with the idea, at least when speaking about the development of founding documents and understanding the reality and what is the real meaning of a craft syndicate. However, there has been little feedback.

Maybe we really do not need a Journalists syndicate?

WHY A NEW TRADE UNION?

I am more skeptical, but much more convinced of the need of a trade union of mass-media employees.

Why would we need a new syndicate?

First of all, because no one else knows our problems better than we do. Secondly, although there were many conflicting cases in mass-media which, besides having political connotations, had a social content (the hunger-strike from Euro TV, the strike from the National Television, "Accente" case), the trade union of the employees, working in the field

of culture which pretends to represent us did not get involved, because it was not informed. Thirdly, in the Work Convention on the national level, as well as in the one at the branch level, multiple issues of the craft are not to be found.

As regards the actual syndicate, the journalists being a part of it, you never understand how they try to use the same game rules for those who work in a club in a district center and for those who work in mass-media. The social implication, as well as the work intensity, is completely different. The trade union is created, first of all, to defend the professional rights. And no matter how you look at them, they are different for the two categories. The trade union that, I repeat, pretends to represent us, has signed the Work Convention with the Ministry of Culture, which has very few common interests with our profession. However, they would have much in common with owners of media institutions or with employers that represent us.

Additionally, the confrontations among the existing syndicate, which actually differ only by political options and names, but are mainly the same, have deepened the strife in the journalistic environment. The authorities manipulate this situation skillfully.

There is a need for a journalists' trade union in order to establish on-going relationships between mass-media employers and employees, develop the legal framework of these relationships and give them consistency. The actual situation reminds us of a kind of bondage, in which at a certain point either of the parties can deceive the other about the relationship. Either the employer or the employee deceives: the effects are the same - both lose.

Let us look at the ordinary work agreement. One out of three journalists has not signed any agreement according to the poll organized within the project. Even if the employees concluded agreements, 51% of them are concluded for a period not exceeding one year. Thus there is no certainty that you will not be fired tomorrow. Only 41% think those agreements can significantly protect journalists from internal or external aggressions, including from dismissal, while 53% think that these contracts protect them adequately, very little or not at all.

Many agreements are just a formality. They are concluded with a lot of deviations from the Labor Code. And how does such a contract that is legally invalid help the employers? In court (if you arrive there) the employee will win the case.

The argument brought in by the employers who sign this sketchy document is that the economic situation of press institutions is very bad. It is true, we are very far away from what is normal regarding the financial aspect of the press. But a work

convention and a work agreement is not as much a pecuniary document, although this aspect cannot be neglected, as it is a document that guarantees to the journalist a social dignity according to the profession and its unconstrained exercise. There cannot be a free press if the journalist is not free. But he or she is not free if his or her rights are not protected.

Thus, 69% of the 100 journalists who participated in the poll asserted that their economic and social rights are protected only to a small extent, and 15% - to a very small extent. 77% admit that their agreements do not provide assistance from the institution in case of a court action.

Do you want more arguments?

Actually the argument of those who hold back the creation of the Journalists' trade union is that we have an abnormal situation (the process of making public the press institutions has not been finished, the economic situation of media institutions is poor), thus we should wait for better times. They say we should solve first of all the issues regarding transforming media institutions into public ones, the economic consolidation of mass media and then all the other issues (including the formation of a trade union). I am sure we need to go forward in solving all the issues in all directions.

WHAT WOULD BE THE IDEAL FORMULA?

What Kind of Syndicate Do We Need?

This is a controversial issue, even when discussing who will take part in this syndicate. 34% of the poll participants think the Journalists' Trade Union should include only the employees. It is actually normal that the employers should unite into an Employers' organization. 28% think the trade union should be constituted from press institutions, 27% think the trade union should include both employees and employers, and 11% think it should be created on voluntary basis.

"It would be ideal to have a trade union similar to the one in Greece, which is very selective in accepting members, and has become an organization whose opinion is taken into consideration by the Government" some participants assert.

Others plead for a classical syndicate with a social basis that would overcome the framework of mass-media institutions by attracting publishing and printing houses. The Journalists' Trade Union from Ukraine, as well as those from Russia and Kazakhstan, which are comparable regions, unite employees of publishing houses, enterprises and organizations, that have something in common with mass media activities, and students and pupils of professional schools.

"Why would we need a Journalists' Trade Union if we have Journalists Union? Who do we need to protect journalists from? How should they be protected? Will there not appear a mammoth paid from journalists' fees?" These are the questions of the skeptics, or maybe they are the realists. Although they

assert that a professional union with very clear functions can be much more efficient than a syndicate, they plead for a syndicate.

"If we had a syndicate of journalists, we would have the legal right to participate in the approval of legislative acts and thus, we could promote our interests more easily through the legislative process. Other professional organizations do not have this right", declare the journalists who plead for the syndicate.

It is obvious that there is not an ideal formula, just as there is no experience that we can use without taking into account our reality.

Consensus can be attained only through debates. It is important we move forward both in creating the syndicate and in creating an employers' organization, the social dialog partner of the syndicate.

FROM BOTTOM TO TOP

Organizing the Journalists' Trade Union should begin from primary organizations (at the unit level), the only ones that according to the legislation in force can decide the creation of a syndicate at the national level.

A standard trade union structure is created from bottom to top. No matter how good the idea, we cannot create a trade union without the primary organizations at the unit level. It is true that the legislation in force does not provide how many primary organizations can create a structure on a national level. Romania has the notion of representation. We do not have it.

Seven-eight or ten primary organizations can unite in one trade union

We could take this path. During the discussions within four round tables organized in the center, south and north of Moldova the idea of initiating the process of creating a Journalists Trade Union has been promoted, so that it could be registered in a few weeks.

How viable would such a syndicate be? This is a question for many people. They say the syndicate should be representative, that only in this way will it have the authority and power that they can count on. The new syndicate should differ entirely from the ones that exist. It is important that we do not focus on the way the existing trade unions in the Republic of Moldova are organized and run. This is the conclusion of the round table participants.

Should we hurry? We have also the example of Romania. The Syndicated Union, MediaSind, has gone through a difficult and long process of creation, from 30 members four years ago to over 8000 members in 2004, and affiliation to the International Journalists Federation.

Could we take the same path? Why not?

Finally the journalists' trade union could be organized according to domains - TV, radio, newspapers, and printing

houses that would unite into an independent Federation of journalists' trade unions and negotiate directly with the Government, employers' organization and other partners.

There is an extensive and vacant place for creating a new syndicate. According to the same poll, 63% of all respondents said they were not members of the syndicate, and two out of three press institutions have no syndicate. So, they could start with the institutions that do not have a trade union.

HOW DO WE SURVIVE?

The question we should ask ourselves is: how do we survive – from member fees, external financial assistance or other sources?

Ukraine, for example, started with donations provided by international organizations. Russia did the same. Why would we exclude this method?

These are just a few of the questions that need an answer. The idea will be successful only if the journalists feel they are participants in this process. In December a booklet will be published that will include the bill for the Journalists Syndicate Statute and other documents. It will be distributed to media institutions and we count a lot on their participation in discussions.

Undoubtedly both the supporters and opponents of this idea admit there is an acute need for a trade union of the press, which would reflect the patterns of the field and plead for the regulation of rights and obligations of employers and employees regarding work conditions, salaries, promotion and guaranteed equitable work relationships that ensure the social protection of employees and other rights and obligations resulting from work relationships. A trade union is needed to protect and promote the rights and economic, social and professional interests of mass-media employees.

Valeriu SAHARNEANU

Radio and TV rebroadcasting: arguments for and against it

I do not know any other country in Europe that "succeeded" in hurting itself through the phenomenon of rebroadcasting foreign channels, as the Republic of Moldova did in the almost ten years the national broadcasting system existed. The paradox is that the process of methodological alienation of the information space is directly connected with the creation in 1995 of the Broadcasting Coordinating Council. This institution is obliged by its statute to control the development of this domain according to the national interests of the country.

The misfortune happened when the creation of this important institution was the task of the agrarian government – a political group formed from the remains of the Soviet nomenclature, refined and supported by the former imperial system and having revanchist objectives to annihilate the enthusiasm for integration of the Republic of Moldova within national and European natural territories. This government, which founded all the decisive institutions of the state after the general elections in 1994, deliberately avoided appointing responsible and professional representatives with strict principles within the Council. As a consequence, the criterion of political loyalty replaced for a very long period the competition of competence, professionalism, and responsibility for the public and national interest in the Republic of Moldova.

As it happened in almost all the country's spheres of activity, which depended on the quality of the political class and on the decisions it made, the acts in the broadcasting domain were aimed at substituting the national interest with Russian Federation interests of strategic dominance in the region.

The radio station Polidisc started its activity back in 1994, one year before the Broadcasting Coordinating Council (BCC), the national regulation authority, was created. Shortly after beginning its activity, this station abandoned the policy of creating its own programs; they started to rebroadcast a radio station from Moscow. In one year the state regulation authority was created and the Law on Broadcasting was developed and adopted by the agrarian Parliament. Nobody found any violations in more and more frequent rebroadcasting of Russian radio stations by the local bearers of radio licenses.

Neither the President of the country, nor the Parliament nor the Government found it necessary to redress the situation in favor of the local public that needed a single source of information – the local radio and television, controlled by the governance in charge, while the developing radio and television institutions offered more foreign, i.e. Russian sources of information.

The informational value of these sources was and is still irrelevant for the local public opinion that was effectively transferred by these information means into an environment which was foreign to the one they lived and worked in. This

fact was convenient for the political authorities (including the actual ones) from Chişinău that due to the lack of local media monitoring, were openly stealing and destroying public goods. It is well known that in this period the gravest prejudices to the public and national interest were made, the country was invaded by corruption, poverty and legal debauchery, a situation that led to the installation of the communist governing regime as an alternative to the democratic one. And both the agrarian and the communist governances in the late 1990s were meant to be confused with democratic governance.

The practice extended rapidly over the domain of television, especially over cable television, organized within city districts and gradually within cities. In only four years, without a strategy and a national concept of development that is the direct obligation of the BCC, the national broadcasting space of the Republic of Moldova found itself dominated almost totally by the Russian broadcasting media, rebroadcast from Moscow by legally approved local agents.

Thus the democratic practice of “information without borders”, promoted and recommended by the Council of Europe in a series of documents, has been transformed into a new and modern form of activity - informational activity in a poorly managed country – the Republic of Moldova.

The civil society gave the first signs of concern to the Broadcasting Coordinating Council on abusive rebroadcasts and on the policy promoted in this respect. In May 1999, the Congress of the Journalists Union of Moldova issued a Special Resolution, in which the causes, effects and consequences of the abusive practices were shown for the first time, mentioning the responsibilities of BCC, as well as of other key institutions of the state that tolerate or even encourage the informational activity of the Republic of Moldova.

In August of the same year another non-governmental organization, the Alumni Committee of Romanian and Western Institutions (CAIRO) brought an action against the Broadcasting Coordinating Council for promoting a Russification policy by means of radio and television. The arguments of the civil society against some abusive rebroadcasts of radio stations and television channels from the Russian Federation have been motivated by the following practices:

1. The public opinion in the Republic of Moldova has been deprived of local sources of information by substituting news about events happening daily on its territory with information from another country that has no public value.
2. In periods before elections and during the election campaign, the media rebroadcast from Russian Federation have intervened politically in Moldova by promoting the candidates preferred by the political class from Moscow and by manipulating the electorate.
3. The Romanian speaking population that constitutes the

majority in the Republic of Moldova found itself in a state of linguistic discrimination, thus its right to inform and be informed in the native language was violated.

The arguments against this practice could continue because its effects have and will have serious effects on the diversion of the Republic of Moldova from its course of European democratic orientation. The intrusions and media pressures of the Russian Federation on the Republic of Moldova will increase, taking into account the fact, which definitely can't be neglected, that most of the trusts, companies and media institutions in the Russian Federation have been monopolized by the state and are totally controlled. The problem of press freedom in Russia is obvious.

Recovery of information space of the Republic of Moldova, which is now dominated by media from the Russian Federation, is imperative even today. Obviously, it can be obtained only when responsible, good professionals and good citizens are promoted in the Broadcasting Coordinating Council. Recovery is necessary not because we are against the Russian media because of anti-Russian feelings, but because the practices of rebroadcasting Russian channels exceeds reasonable and useful limits. The abusive form that this phenomenon has nowadays damages not only the informational and linguistic equilibrium of the Republic of Moldova, but also the national security of the state.

If proportions are to be respected, rebroadcasts, when necessary, of programs of foreign radio stations and television channels on the territory of the Republic of Moldova are in the interests of the local public and public opinion. By proven correctness and professionalism, the radio stations BBC, Radio Free Europe, Deutsche Welle, Radio Romania News, Radio France International-Radio Delta, as well as many commercial stations are accepted in the local media space and do not raise problems of incompatibility. Moreover, all of them prepare and broadcast programs in the official language of the state, where they have extended their coverage area.

In this respect the previously mentioned cases regarding the foreign radio stations which broadcast on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, as well as the television channels broadcast by local operators who needed media support at the initial launching stages, are welcome and even doing well. First of all the local listener or viewer becomes better informed. It is a natural and inevitable tendency of the information globalization process that started a decade ago and will increase in the immediate future of the century we live in.

However, globalization does not mean the abusive annihilation of national informational spaces, as is happening today in the Republic of Moldova. Even at the last meeting of the Broadcasting Coordinating Council that took place on December 6, 2005, requests for developing local media were repeatedly blocked by this “regulating authority” that again offered in a demonstrative and ostentatious way 98

per cent of radio frequencies and available TV channels to those candidates who rebroadcast mostly from the Russian Federation. And the Polidisc radio, the one that started rebroadcasting Russian radio, identified today as Russkoe Radio 1 and Russkoe Radio 2, has easily obtained all the

requested frequencies for its expansion in the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

In such a situation, rebroadcasting is more than an abuse, and the BCC is more than an innocent and impartial distributor of licenses.

Olivia PÎRȚAC

State Sustainment of Mass Media: European Traditions and the Case of the Republic of Moldova

Mass-media financing is a complicated issue, and not only in the Republic of Moldova. Difficulties come from the fact that a lot of mass-media institutions cannot cover their costs only by selling printed newspapers and the advertising they place in it. On the contrary, a considerable part of publications appear due to donations from different sources, which are more or less transparent.

I. Press Financing by the State: the Beginning

Back in the '50s many Western European countries confronted the problem of the sudden reduction of daily newspapers. The phenomenon could be noticed especially in local publications that could not compete with strong national papers. In the middle of the '60s special parliamentary commissions were created in Scandinavian countries to analyze the situation of the mass media and make proposals for solving unfavorable situations. From the recommendations of these commissions came the idea for the economically weak press to be sustained by the state.¹

Because most of the party newspapers belonged to this category, they benefited from the greatest part of the subsidies. The first country to create a system of subsidizing economically weakened publications and the most active one in this area is Sweden. The system is based on the principle of citizens' equal access to information, and on the consideration that press subsidizing is a guarantee for a certain level of pluralism on the local market.

II. An Example Followed by Many European Countries

The example of Sweden, in a more or less similar formula, was followed by many European countries. For example, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands introduced subsidies for the press in order to solve the increasing problem of newspaper loss in the second part of

the 20th century. This was mainly generated by the increasing importance of television and radio, and increasing costs and concentration of mass-media ownership in the hands of few people. Every country has clearly established that the purpose of the subsidies is to ensure diversity and pluralism in the modern democracy, creating special conditions and criteria for a newspaper to be able to obtain subsidies (theoretically, newspaper's political orientation should be irrelevant)².

The idea was also taken over by the Council of Europe in Recommendation No. (99) on stimulating measures for mass-media pluralism that suggests, "the member-states could examine the possibility to introduce some systems of direct or indirect financial assistance in written press or radio broadcasting, especially at the regional and local level in order to promote pluralism and diversity of mass-media. (...). Besides the supporting measures for creation, production and distribution of audio and video programs, as well as other types of materials that contribute significantly to the mass-media pluralism, the member-states could also examine the supporting measures to promote the creation of new enterprises in the mass-media field or assist mass-media that face difficulties or those that are obliged to adapt to the structural or technological changes."

III. What Do the Subsidies Consist of?

The supporting measures in favor of mass-media are generally classified into two categories: direct subsidies and indirect measures, such as tax breaks.

For example, in Sweden the weakened newspapers receive direct subsidies that are focused on maintaining those newspapers in the market rather than on improving their economic situation, thus maintaining press diversity. Also the newly-founded newspapers are sustained. One form of sustenance is loans with preferential terms, usually granted for the modernisation of equipment. These newspapers are also exempted from income

1. Vartanova Elena "Redemption in Name of Democracy " // "ЗиП", № 2 (1997), www.medialaw.ru

2. Ruth Evan. "Media subsidies", May 1999 // www.article19.org.

tax on income from advertising, and state advertising is compulsorily placed there.

But some measures of indirect sustenance refer to all newspapers. They consist of exemption from VAT and low post tariffs.

All Finnish newspapers receive subsidies for transportation and distribution costs.

In Russia, there is a law "on sustaining by the state of mass-media and book production from the Russian Federation". On the basis of this law, other laws by federative republics have been adopted that establish criteria at the regional level, allowing allocation of resources for the development of material resources of district (city) newspapers, payment of delivery services, purchase of paper and publishing services costs.

Every country has established its own formula of granting subsidies, both their form and the criteria, according to which the beneficiaries are selected. For example, here are just a few of the terms that a newspaper from Austria should meet in order to obtain subsidies.³

1. It should contain political, economic or general knowledge information and should be of interest outside the local level.
2. It should be distributed and should be important at a level outside the regional level.
3. It should be printed and published in Austria.
4. It should be published at least 50 times per year, etc.

IV. Unfavorable Consequences of Subsidizing

The existing terms in Austria contributed to the subsidizing of newspapers of national interest exclusively, which were strong anyway, and the party newspapers that expressed a single orientation began to disappear.

The subsidies are not always a positive instrument for mass-media development. In some cases they are a discriminatory instrument, because sustaining certain newspapers results in their strengthening, but other newspapers get weak and disappear. This means that state intervention, if it is not judiciously managed, can produce a non-justified inequality in some cases.

Besides, in Austria, France and even in Sweden it has been debated that the corresponding subsidizing has not been totally free of political influence.

In the Recommendation of the Council of Europe No. (99)1 on pluralism stimulating measures in mass media, this issue is tackled: "any sustaining measures should be granted on the basis of objective and impartial criteria, within some transparent procedures and should be subjected to

independent control. The terms of granting subsidies should be revised periodically in order to eliminate the occasional encouraging of any processes of mass-media concentration or abnormal enrichment of enterprises that gain profits from such sustaining."

There exists also the opinion that subsidizing actually weakens newspapers, because it does not allow them to become commercially strong and able to compete with new media technologies.

For example, in Denmark the idea of subsidizing media has been rejected for a long time. The main argument "against" it was the fear to place the press in an ideological dependency on the state. Another argument resulted from the fact that in maintaining the inefficient and poorly managed newspapers on the market, the state prevented industry adaptation to the market economy. However, in the '70s modest subsidies were introduced for a weak press in Denmark, granted through the Press Financial Institute.

Although the subsidizing methods vary by countries, it seems that despite subsidizing, newspapers continue to disappear from the markets of these countries.⁴

V. Favorable Consequences of Subsidizing

Generally the system of sustaining the press economically is appraised as efficient. Most publications that were granted subsidies still exist. The Swedish state grants small amounts to newspapers and these amounts cover 15-20% of their production costs, which means that with no state subsidies, these newspapers would certainly have closed. Finnish economists have evaluated the situation in the following way: if the publications market of Finland had been regulated only by market economy rules, then half of the existing publications would have disappeared.⁵

VI. Situation in the Republic of Moldova

In the Republic of Moldova, state subsidization of periodicals exists, but in a specific discriminatory formula. Thus, the state has its own publications. Throughout the 1990s the state had publications, depending on how many it could support. Some were innocent, others less innocent and extensively used to indoctrinate the population with ideas, favorable for governance.

In 2005, the existent dissatisfactions generated a new process of transforming state press into public institutions. It began in June, when two Government Decisions were adopted one after another: one on the liquidation of the State Enterprise "Nezavisimaia Moldova" newspaper⁶, and the second on

3. Ruth Evan. "Media subsidies", May 1999 // www.article19.org

4. Ruth Evan. "Media subsidies", May 1999 // www.article19.org.

5. Vartanova Elena "Redemption in Name of Democracy" // "ЗиП", № 2 (1997), www.medialaw.ru

6. Government Decision on the liquidation of the State Enterprise „Nezavisimaia Moldova” newspaper No. 515 of 01.06.2005, M.O. no. 77-79, 2005

the liquidation of the State Enterprise “Moldova Suverană” newspaper⁷. The Chişinău Municipal Council liquidated the press body of the Chişinău City Hall: News Agency “Info-prim”. This was the beginning. It generated more discontent, but the consequences will become apparent some time later, when things get clearer.

Independent local newspapers have become involved too, requesting transformation of local state press into public institutions. On July 26 the Independent Press Association and the Independent Journalism Center organized a round table on this topic. A Resolution was adopted, signed by 22 people, mostly representatives of independent local newspapers. This Resolution mentions: “After the ‘rayons’ were re-established and ‘rayon’ newspapers reappeared, published by local public administrations on the initiative of President Voronin, the operating conditions of the regional and local independent newspapers worsened in many aspects. Thus they had to resist not only the non-loyal competitiveness, but also some administrative pressures or even harassments from some local officials. Being subsidized by the local public budgets, the newspapers of regional councils are sold at a lower price than private ones; in some rayons, the town halls, state institutions and post offices have the specific task to subscribe to newspapers published by rayon councils, while independent newspapers face difficulties in their subscription campaigns; advertising is placed in state newspapers.”

Such a situation does not conform to the democratic standards in mass media. The policy of local independent press impairment is against the binding agreements of the Republic of Moldova to respect mass-media freedom and freedom of expression. Referring specifically to rayon newspapers’ topics, the OSCE representative for press freedom Miklós Haraszti, who visited the Republic of Moldova in October 2004 declared: “The concept of a press, sustained from public resources is incompatible with an advanced economy. As a minimum condition, the number of such newspapers should not increase and there should not be administrative or economic discrimination against an independent press. There is no need to re-establish the so-called ‘rayon newspapers’, i. e. newspapers financed by local administrations”. (...)

The action plan European Union--Republic of Moldova stipulates “ensuring a transparent relationship between authorities and media institutions according to recommendations of the Council of Europe, financial aid from the state for mass-media, granted according to strict and objective criteria, equally applied to all mass-media institutions; development and implementation of a legally adequate framework that guarantees freedom of expression and mass-media freedom according to European standards and on the basis of the standards of Council of Europe. (...)

“The state, society and journalists will gain from the process of transforming state press institutions into public institutions. The state will get rid of the cost burden for maintaining state newspapers. Society will entirely benefit from one of the most important instruments of control over the governance: an objective press of quality. This can exist only when the needs and interests of the readers, and not those of the authorities or of the governing party, are put first and when journalists have the possibility to work in equal, civilized conditions, natural for a democratic society based on a market economy”.

The representatives of newspapers financed by rayon councils have not signed the mentioned Resolution and it is understandable: it is very comfortable when you have a fixed salary, you know what you should do and no competitiveness threatens you.

VII. A Complicated Question

Anyway, what should be the state role in Moldovan mass media? Mass media financed by the state has been so partial in the last decade that it is obvious that the existing formula is unacceptable. But should we renounce state investments in mass media? For example, what if there are only two newspapers in one rayon. One has its office in a school, does not pay rent, nor for electricity, and its employees are paid from the rayon budget. The other newspaper gets no payment from the same budget. Why wouldn't the rayon budget sustain both newspapers to the same extent? For example, if both could benefit from free offices and subsidies to cover electricity and publishing costs? (and all the other issues that are natural consequences of the management and professionalism of the said newspapers.)

More precisely, the question would be: could we develop some objective criteria in the Republic of Moldova that would allow the mass media to be sustained by the state to a certain extent, so that this sustaining does not lead to political obligations? So that this sustaining could be beneficial if it existed? Is it worth making a law for this purpose?

VIII. What Should the State Do?

My intuition tells me the answers to the previous questions would be negative at this moment. There is so much censorship and so many forms of pressure on mass media by the governance in our country that I am not sure if somebody thinks that those objective criteria would save diversity and pluralism, and publications could be created and implemented so that political or commercial interests of the government have no importance in this process.

But still, the state could and should apply some measures

7. Government Decision on the liquidation of the State Enterprise „Moldova Suverană” newspaper No. 587 of 20.06.2005, M.O. no. 86-88, 2005

to sustain publications, but with no discrimination. The state should apply different tax breaks for the press, and the monopolist „Poșta Moldovei” (Post of Moldova) should reduce costs, including the level at which its losses are covered by the state.

So far, all the facilities granted by the state to the press are covered by article 103 par. 1) p. 22 of the Fiscal Code: the import of goods, services and deliveries of goods and rendering of services that relate to “book productions and periodicals (except for those having advertising and erotic topics), as well as the publishing services for books and periodicals, except for those mentioned before”. According to this stipulation of the Law, the Ministry of Finance “in order to guide and coach the practical work” has developed a Bulletin on exemption from VAT for production of books and periodicals. (No.05/1-2-07/287 of 16.05.2001)⁸. But this Bulletin complicates things rather than helps, unjustifiably restricting legal action.

In reality many publications avoid complications and pay VAT, as do publishing and printing houses, although it is obvious they do not have to do it.

IX. The Last Problem: Lack of Foreign Investments

Very often we lament the lack of foreign investments in Moldovan publications. I do not know why nobody pays attention to the fact that according to the legislation such investments actually would be meaningless. A foreigner can have up to 49% of the statutory capital of a publication

and in no way can be editor-in-chief. These are the existing provisions of the Press Law.⁹ This situation is actually the same in the broadcasting field. “Foreign individuals or legal entities, except for those that have joint ventures with Moldovan partners, do not have the right to found radio and television institutions on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.”¹⁰ In this domain such restrictions exist all over the world, not only in transition countries, but also in the West, including the USA. The suspicions regarding foreign properties have their origin in the war period, when there was a fear that radio and television would be used as hostile propaganda. There is also an opinion that objects belonging to citizens of a certain country can be more easily controlled during national crises than corporations that belong to foreigners.

Anyway, such restrictions in written press are illogical. There is no danger that a foreigner will found a publication in the Republic of Moldova, and this will not undermine the economy. On the contrary, it is possible that foreign investments could bring something new and even positive to the Moldovan press.

Besides, even in the domain of radio and television institutions these restrictive stipulations seem archaic and make no sense. Defending the internal information market makes sense only if the country's borders are closed. Today the Internet, satellite television and other present and future modern information technologies transform the information market of any country into an absolutely transparent one. We need to adjust the legislation to the conditions of the global information society.

8. published in M.O. no. 75-77/212 of 06.07.2001

9. Press Law No.243-XIII of 26.10.94, M.O. no.2/12 of 12.01.1995. Art. 5: “(3) Foreign individuals and legal entities have the right to participate as co-founders of the periodical publications and press agencies, holding not more than 49 % of statutory capital”; Art. 8: “(6) as editor (editor-in-chief) of periodical publications and chiefs of press agencies only citizens of the Republic of Moldova can be appointed”

10. Broadcasting Law No..603-XIII of 03.10.95, M.O. no.70/798 of 14.12.1995: art. 5 par. (2)

Nicolae NEGRU

Media Monitoring in the Republic of Moldova

The permanent monitoring of newspapers, radio and television programs for purposes other than censorship is one of the regulating and auto-regulating mechanisms of mass-media activity in a democratic society. The way mass media reflect the reality, freedom of expression, access of different categories of the population to information, and editorial trends should be of interest to public authorities, civil society, and political parties that pursue the democratization of the Republic of Moldova.

Monitoring of Elections

The first elections monitored were in electoral campaigns at the request of some European organizations – Council of Europe, OSCE and European Institute for the Media (EIM), created in 1989 specifically to observe mass-media development in Central and Eastern European countries in transition. EIM monitored the parliamentary elections in 1994, presidential elections in

1996, and parliamentary elections in 1998 and 2001 in the Republic of Moldova.

In the summer of 1997 (June 16-22) the Center for Sociological, Political and Psychological Analysis and Investigations (CIVIS) monitored the State Television Channel "Moldova 1" and the private television channel "Catalan" in order to determine how these channels reflect "political life in the pre-election period". (The parliamentary elections were planned for the spring of 1998). The monitoring was financed by the Soros Foundation and the main consultant was Bruno Ștefan, the vice-director of the Independent Center for Social Studies and Polls from Bucharest. The monitoring concerned the news typology – the share of local social-political news and of international news, the subjects of local news and geography (reference countries) of international news, degree of coverage of governments and political parties and the positive or negative context of the coverage of different political and social agents.

The corresponding methodology was applied in partnership with the Independent Journalism Center in monitoring the local elections in 2003. In the parliamentary elections in 2005 the monitoring methodology was provided by the international organization "Article 19: Global Campaign for Free Expression" that is concerned with mass-media evolution in post-Soviet territories.

IMAS Chișinău participated for the first time in the monitoring of local elections in Chișinău in 2005. They integrated the methods used by the Press Monitoring Agency from Bucharest and the Independent Journalism Center from Chișinău.

Who Else Should Monitor

According to legislation in force, the Central Electoral Committee and the Broadcasting Coordinating Council have the function of monitoring mass-media program content. These two institutions have the obligation to regulate the way electoral campaigns are reflected in mass-media and to provide equal access conditions to public mass-media for all electoral candidates. Anyway, neither the Central Electoral Committee, nor the Broadcasting Coordinating Council have monitored mass-media so far and have not even ordered such monitoring, mainly because of insufficient financing.

The Broadcasting Law, adopted in October 1995, obliges the Broadcasting Coordinating Council through article 38 to develop annually a report on "the way the licensees respect the obligations stipulated in the mentioned law". This includes implicitly monitoring functions of radio and TV programs broadcast on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. However, until present the monitoring of the BCC is sporadic and refers only to some aspects of mass-media operation. For example, in January-February 2005, the BCC organized the monitoring of national, public and private channels and of some local public and private

channels regarding the "quality of the language" spoken (Moldova 1, Euro TV-Chișinău, Antena C, Moldova 1, NIT, Radio Bălți, TV Bălți, Sănătate, Radio-Moldova). (The BCC recently announced it has purchased necessary technical equipment for permanent monitoring of radio stations and television channels.)

The previous Governments were not interested in making sure that channels financed from public resources enjoyed editorial independence and exercised their main functions by informing the public on issues of public interest by objective and balanced coverage of events, by respecting pluralism of opinions and by offering equitable access to all political parties that compete in elections at the recommendation of the Council of Europe and other European organizations.

Having developed a code of professional ethics, approved in May 1999, the journalistic craft has exhausted its organizational resources and still has not managed to create a mechanism that would permanently monitor and sanction the deviations from approved principles by most journalistic organizations. There is a National Committee of Ethics, but it only examines some accidental complaints. Unlike other countries, there is no "watch-dog" in the Republic of Moldova that would report periodically tendencies, partisanship, imposture, and deceit in programs, news, talk-shows, and articles of Moldovan journalists.

Other Monitorings

After the Law transforming the Company "Teleradio Moldova" into a public institution was adopted, and due to the interest or even the concern towards partisanship of Radio Moldova and particularly TV Moldova 1, the Journalism Center together with the Center and Association of Electronic Press, APEL, monitored news programs and social-political programs in order to establish "how the law on the institution of national public broadcasting was respected regarding the main objectives of the company (art. 2) a) ensuring free access of the society to information; b) objective and plenary coverage of all aspects of social-political, economic and cultural life of the country; c) implementing the right to free expression of ideas and political, religious, national, social or other opinions, respecting the general interests of the society; d) covering the interests of all social classes, propagation of peace, humanism and other democratic values".

The Journalism Center monitored other areas as well, particularly on how diversity, inter-ethnic problems, Transnistrian conflict and human trafficking are covered by the Moldovan press.

Why There Is No Specialized Monitoring Institution?

Media monitorings reflect on the one hand the level of development of the media industry and its infrastructure,

and on the other hand, the press' capacity to organize and auto-regulate itself. The lack of a specialized institution for monitoring is acutely felt in the Republic of Moldova. The weak link of the present monitoring process is the operators. It is impossible to give them a full-time job, so as to benefit from

their knowledge and accumulated experience. Very often a new monitoring campaign means training new operators. Technical, methodology and organizational resources collected so far have created sufficient prerequisites for a specialized, financially independent institution to appear.

Dan DUNGACIU

“Windowshop” Press or the Phenomenon of the “Black Box”

There is media in the Republic of Moldova. It is indubitable. Yes, we have newspapers, radio stations, TV channels. Any official or public officer that develops statistics or writes a report can happily smile at its end. (As in that popular joke since Communist times about agricultural harvests: “we have finished harvesting in newspapers, we still have to finish it on radio and TV”).

Of course you could find people who contest that. But if we take seriously the idea of “public space”, things can't be and are not so simple.

According to all public opinion polls organized in Chişinău within the last few years (sources: *Barometer of Public Opinion* by IPP, Chişinău, polls IRI/ Gallup etc.), written press is the main source of political information for about 7-8% of population nationwide. If we look at the rural population we can see that they use written press less than average in the republic. Radio is the main source of information for 11% and television dominates overwhelmingly: 50-70%, depending on the polls. The national television of the Republic of Moldova is practically a unique player in the market of political news, having 70% partial or total confidence. Moreover, a public opinion research conducted by “IDIS Viitorul” (October 2004) revealed an amazing thing: “pluralism of opinions” is the collocation that, as the first option, expresses best of all the democratic governance only for 4% of respondents (the second option 3%), and “free and independent press” only for 2% (the second option 3%) of the respondents.

How do we “read” democracy/democratization in the Republic of Moldova through these figures? We will mention first of all that the differences between the written press and radio and television can be seen in any democracy in the world. So, the Republic of Moldova is part of a trend. And the remark would be *precise*, but not *true*. Because if it is like that in democratic countries, statistically speaking, they have there a *connective belt between the two media components*: television or radios are resonance boxes for many subjects brought to the public by the written press. In other words, the written press agenda

becomes also the agenda of radio and television, and the quantity differences (percentage) between what is written in newspapers and what is broadcast on TV diminishes or becomes irrelevant.

Here comes the crucial difference between the media in the Republic of Moldova and media in functional democracies (Romania, for example). In the Republic of Moldova *the connective belt between the written media and the television (especially national television) does not exist*. Most of the time we have parallel speeches that never get together and, practically, do not confront one another at the national level in any way.

In the terms used here, *there is no “public space” in the Republic of Moldova*. There is no free access to public speech in the meaning of Weber's “ideal types”; there is no equal access of actors or opinions; there is no space where actors and opinions can meet so that the meeting, the debate, and the dialogue finally result in points of view and decisions. If this *public space* is absent, we do not have public speeches. You cannot compare the share of written press with the share of television channels, especially that of the national television. We have monologues with a different force of influence: one thing is written in newspapers, another thing is discussed on TV. The argument and the justifiability of a decision are most of the time *purely* political (not even in the subtle meaning given by Foucault!) and are not subjected to severe criticism through public dialogue (thus *talk-shows* quasi exist).

One more time. There is free press in the Republic of Moldova. But the structural mechanisms that exist and are retained at the society level just pulverize the idea of diversity because the share of public discussion is insignificant. Hence the apparent paradox: although free press exists (and many journalists can write absolutely everything they want in their newspapers), there is no “public space”. Thus, as a consequence, there is no real media *pluralism*. We have an average show-window democracy, where public speeches that have not been previously approved politically have limited access: they circulate freely in a *black box* they can never leave. There, area authors and newspapers address the same public while stepping on each

other. But it is small and constrained to buy fewer and fewer newspapers because of economic reasons. Television is cozier and cheaper!

Finally, the apparent paradox can be expressed as follows: *there is free press in the Republic of Moldova, but there is no democratization of public space.*

*Corina FUSU,
journalist, Co-president of the Committee for Defense of Human and Professional Dignity*

Unfinished Journalistic Protest at “Teleradio-Moldova”

The protests began spontaneously on July 27, 2004. If I analyze retrospectively the events, I can assert for sure: that morning we were thinking only about organizing a press conference during lunch break.

In the morning we had a meeting of the Anti-Censorship Committee for Electronic Press, in which the directors of the Radio and TV News Departments, Valentina Ursu and Valeriu Frumusachi, took part. We decided to create the Committee for Defense of Human and Professional Dignity (CADUP). We invited Mr. Dorin Chirtoacă, project coordinator at Helsinki Committee for Human Rights at that time, to attend that meeting. We elected him with a majority of votes as the legal representative of CADUP.

We wanted to inform the public and the press about more illegal actions, committed by the Company's administration during the process of transforming the State Company “Teleradio-Moldova” into the National Broadcasting Public Institution. We informed the administration of the Company “Teleradio-Moldova”, the Observers' Council, the Parliamentary Committee for Mass-Media, and the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Moldova on July 15, 2004 about the arbitrary way of transforming the Company and ignoring the legislation, and we received no reply.

The contest for employing specialists in the new institution was at its last stage, and the results of this contest revealed that those journalists were excluded, who since 2001 have constantly opposed censorship and fought for transformation of the State radio-television into an institution servicing the public. As a mark of protest Mircea Surdu, the representative on this committee of the employees, abandoned the contest committee, and the committee did not mind continuing its work, even if a delegate of the employees was absent.

Accused of Politicization by the Communists

This made us go after the press conference that took place on July 27, 2004 in front of the Television building, to the Radio House and go to the 5th floor, where the contest room was situated. We were about 60 people and we entered the

room. The six members of the contest committee did not react in any way to our declarations and demands.

After a few hours of negotiations, the leaders of the parliamentary groups understood we spoke different languages. This was because the leader of the Communists fraction, Mr. Victor Stepaniuc, declared that we were performing a political action. This opacity and refusal to communicate by the management of “Teleradio-Moldova” embittered us and we decided not to leave the contest room unless our demands were satisfied. Among them there were the dismissal of management of “Teleradio-Moldova”, annulment of decisions of the contest committee and amendment of the Public Broadcasting Law. We were sure that all Moldovan society would react with displeasure and would help us reinstate things on their normal path.

The Last Reportage at TV M1

I did not think even for a second then that my reporting about the press conference and other events related to the protest action of journalists on July 27, broadcast on the news program at 9 pm, would be my last report on the TV channel Moldova 1. Right after the news program, the president of the Company, Ilie Teleșco, issued an order by which he dismissed more journalists and prohibited them from entering the property of “Teleradio-Moldova”. According to the Labor Code, those that were dismissed should have worked for two more months.

All these misdoings made us organize non-stop protests that lasted until December 30, 2004. The protests were authorized by the Chișinău City Hall and included those from the square in front of Radio House, meetings in the square close to the Stefan cel Mare monument, as well as picketing Parliament.

We protested non-stop in front of Radio House until late September. It became too cold to sleep outside; the authorities did not react in any way to the hunger-strike of more journalists, stage-directors, combatants of the war on the Nistru River and the Academician, Anatol Codru. The meeting of the Observers' Council of the National Broadcasting Public Institution that was called on September 23, 2004 did not have a quorum in order to approve the

proposals of Val Butnaru, member of the Observers' Council, regarding dismissal of the administration of "Teleradio-Moldova" and annulment of contest committee decisions.

Five Months of Non-Stop Protests

The protests lasted for five months and we were still hoping our efforts would not be in vain, taking into account that our purpose was in the interest of the whole society. We wanted to decontrol politically the most important broadcasting institution of the Republic of Moldova. The Moldovan society supported us as much as the level of development of its civic consciousness allowed. Only those who suffered from the totalitarian system lined up behind us: political prisoners, victims of deportation to Siberia, combatants of the war on the Nistru river, parents, pupils and teachers of schools from the left bank of Nistru river that teach in Romanian and that were abusively closed by the administration of Smirnov's regime. We waited in vain for the students to come back from vacations – our youth had not understood yet how important is freedom of expression for a society that wants to be democratic.

We also counted very much on the support of European institutions, which we constantly informed on the crisis situation at "Teleradio-Moldova". The embassies of the European Union member-states (United Kingdom, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland), as well as the Embassy of the United States of America, the OSCE mission in the Republic of Moldova, and the special representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe made public a common declaration only on October 4, where they expressed their concern about the crisis at the "Teleradio-Moldova" Company.

After the Criticism of President Voronin, Only the Television Director Has Been Changed

But neither the Company's administration, nor the authorities of the Republic of Moldova paid attention to the concerns expressed in this declaration. The recommendations of Miklos Haraszti, OSCE representative for Freedom of Mass Media, were ignored in the same challenging way. He suggested organizing a contest for the vacancies at "Teleradio-Moldova" that would be examined by a Committee that included representatives of the Committee for Defense of Human and Professional Dignity. At the end of December, Mr. Vladimir Voronin, the President of the Republic of Moldova, became interested in the problem of the National Broadcasting Institution. As a reaction to the report of Miklos Haraszti about the press situation in Moldova, Voronin addressed the Observers' Council of the National Broadcasting Public Institution, and made an appeal, expressing his opinion about the unsatisfactory professionalism of the specialists at the

National Broadcasting Public Company. President Voronin made recommendations for news programs and supported the proposals of Miklos Haraszti regarding the contest. The Administration of "Teleradio-Moldova" understood they should change only the Director.

The parliamentary elections of March 2005 were approaching and the parties that considered themselves democratic and in opposition to the governing Communist party rushed to show us their support from the beginning. During the electoral campaign everybody was speaking about the role of mass-media in a democratic society, criticizing the management of the Company "Teleradio-Moldova", promising the reformation of the national broadcasting institution according to European norms.

Accused by the Council of Europe's Rapporteur of "Too Much Courage"

The support that came from Europe, as well as the support of the Opposition turned to be quite powerless. The rapporteur of the Council of Europe for the Republic of Moldova Josette Durrieu told us at a meeting that we had too much courage in our protests, and the Council of Europe couldn't get involved in a labor conflict that was politicized.

What hopes do we have left? We should believe in the correctness of the judicial act and in the fact that the broadcasting legislation will be reformed. During a year and a half we appealed to the courts hoping for justice. We lost the case against the illegalities committed by the administration of the Company "Teleradio-Moldova" at the Supreme Justice Court and we submitted a request to the European Court of Human Rights. In this request our lawyers Vitalie Nagacevski and Vlad Gribincea from the Lawyers for Human Rights Association, as well as Dorin Chirtoacă and Denis Toma from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights invoked the infringement of the fundamental right to free expression when the president of the Company "Teleradio-Moldova" Ilie Teleșco issued the order dismissing 19 employees and forbidding them access to the Company.

We do not know if the ECHR will accept our request. Another case, initiated in autumn of 2004, in which we demanded to be re-employed, to be paid compensations for the whole length of service and recompense for moral damages, was delayed interminably because the representatives of the Company "Teleradio-Moldova" avoided presenting in court the requested documents for the case examination.

"The Evidence" of the Employment Contest Has Been Destroyed

The lawyers of the Public Company state in their brief that they are not responsible for the actions of what is left from the

State Company, the liquidation procedure which has not been finished yet. The lawyer from the State Company says that all the documents are in the archive of the Public Company. We impugned the correctness of the Contest Committee evaluations, so we requested the minutes and the audio tapes recorded during the interview of each candidate to be presented in court. Only at the hearing on November 21, 2005 did we find out that all this evidence did not exist anymore, because it had been destroyed.

We informed the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Moldova on August 2, 2004 about the illegal actions of the police of August 1, 2004, when they ordered an attack on the peaceful protesters during the meeting authorized by the City Hall. More participants in the meeting were injured then: an old man had a cerebral stroke and died; two children almost got suffocated under the pressure of the crowd, tightened and pushed by the police. A tent, set up also with the permission of the City Hall, was the target of the police who had gotten strong indications not to allow putting up the tents.

The Prosecutor's Office of the City of Chişinău rejected the request, invoking the authority of the general prosecutor, who suspended the decision of the local public authority. We made a complaint at the court of the Riscani district, requesting the court to order the prosecutor's office to examine the case and take action. In the same request, as a petitioner, I demanded recognition of the fact that the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Moldova usurped my rights to free expression and peaceful meeting. At the session on December 28, 2005 that took place in the court of Riscani district, my request was rejected as being inadmissible.

Analyzing all that happened to us during one year and a half since the protests of July 27, 2004 broke out, I have the feeling that despite the declared European Vector, the authorities from Chişinău do not want to cede control of the public broadcasting institution.

Betrayed... For How Many Times Already by the Politicians

On April 4, 2005, when Vladimir Voronin was elected the President of the Republic of Moldova, the Popular Christian Democratic Party and the Social Liberal Party submitted to him 10 requests for reforming the legislative framework according to the Action Plan European Union – Republic of Moldova. Namely, the first request referred to the reform of the public broadcasting institution. We are now in December and the Parliament has not rushed to discuss the bills, developed already by parliamentary fractions. President Voronin said in a communiqué at PRO TV that there are other priorities, such as reforming the judicial system and implementing economic reforms. The same thing was asserted recently by the deputy of the Popular Christian Democratic Party, Angela Aramă, in

a transmission dedicated to the press situation in Moldova, broadcast on the Romania International channel.

If "Teleradio-Moldova" serves the public interest indeed, it is enough to listen to its radio programs and watch TV. For example, the way the debate programs during electoral campaign for the position of general mayor of Chişinău City were organized. The existing legislation stipulates that the debates be broadcast at a time with maximum audience, i.e. between 7 pm and 10 pm. The television channel Moldova1 broadcast the debate programs at 5 pm, when people were still at work or on their way home.

On November, 27, Election Day, the viewers waited in vain to watch a transmission on the results of the voting after the news program at 9 pm. Instead feature films and cultural programs were broadcast until midnight. Only at 00:45 am were Mircea Surdu and his guest Igor Boţan put on the air, but I do not know if there was anyone watching them, because the program was not announced previously and was not mentioned in the Programming Schedule. Instead, at the time of maximum audience, after the news program at 7 pm, you could enjoy an imposing project, supported by President Vladimir Voronin with the suggestive name "Culture Caravel" – a series of programs designed for a four year period and featuring the pop-singer Lenuţa Burghilă. This had the purpose to increase the level of national consciousness of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova.

We, the journalists that protested against censorship and against the false and arbitrary way the National Broadcasting Public Institution was created, are deeply disappointed at the quality of our political sophistication and of the high degree of conformity of Moldovan society. The protests from "Teleradio-Moldova" were suppressed in a very skillful way. First of all, the well-known tactic of absolute ignorance of this severe crisis of the national broadcasting institution was used. A policy of disparagement of protests and of their leaders was applied. The population was misinformed through mass media, controlled by the government. The Committee for Defense of Human and Professional Dignity was dismembered and eroded from inside.

Unemployed That Are Avoided by the Employers

Most of us cannot find a job in journalism, at a radio station or TV channel. The offers from mass-media market are poor and even do not exist. Our press is restrained by poverty and totally lacks investments in Romanian-speaking media. Sometimes we have the impression the employers avoid us as people unaccepted by the political system and do not want to risk their own carrier. I pass over in silence the bad effects on our health of the very cold nights we lived in front of Radio House, and the hunger-strike and multiple stresses that overwhelmed us.

But undeniably, we were a dreaded power during the protests, because a part of the society saw in us people who honestly want a prosperous, democratic and European future for the Republic of Moldova. Democracy does not consist only of nice words and declarations. The democratic vocation should be proven with concrete deeds and actions, reforming the laws according to European standards, as well as applying them according

to these standards. Otherwise everything becomes an imposter.

Check if the leadership of the Republic of Moldova wants the democratization of society by applying two fundamental criteria of a democracy – an independent judicial system and press freedom. At present these goals are unattainable. The experience of the protests of the journalists from “Teleradio-Moldova” proves this profusely.

Doru PETRUȚI,
director IMAS Chișinău

TV monitoring in the electoral campaign

1-25 November 2005

Methodology:

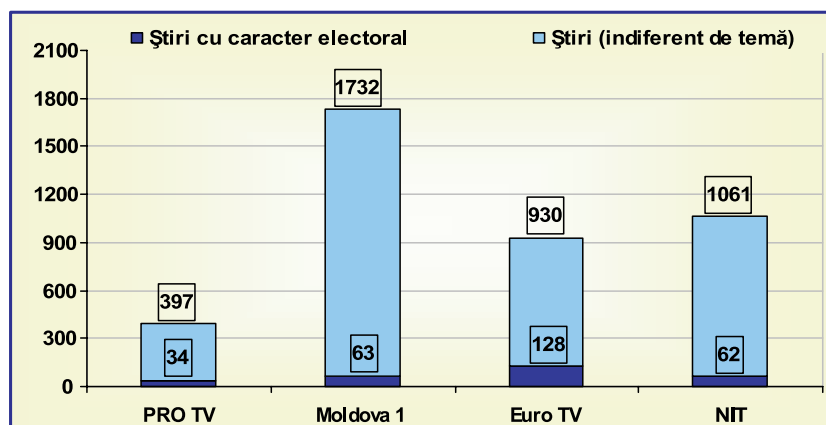
- Monitored TV channels: Pro TV Chisinau, Moldova 1, Euro TV, NIT.
- Electoral news was considered only the news that was related or made reference (directly or indirectly) to the local elections of Chisinau (a candidate is introduced, somebody speaks about him, a politician speaks about the city's priorities and makes it clear that their party and candidate would solve that problem, etc.).
- In order to decide whether a material favored or disfavored, both explicit judgment and the context were taken into account.
- Candidates:
- Monitoring schedule:
 - Total number of news with or without electoral character

- Duration of bulletins/news with electoral character
- Topics and subjects of news
- Level of correctness in covering an event (favor, disfavor, neutrality)
- Frequency of appearance of candidates for the mayor's office
- Duration of appearance/intervention of candidates in TV news
- Information source

The monitoring was conducted by IMAS Chisinau, with the financial support of the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Moldova.

In the monitored time interval, electoral news represented 7.0% (287 pieces of news) of the total news presented on the four TV channels, and had a share of 8.4% (9 hours, 25 minutes, 46 seconds) as duration in the total duration allocated to news.

Number of electoral news items – 1-25 November



Duration of electoral news

Share of electoral news reported to duration					
TV Channel	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	TOTAL
PRO TV	10,4%	5,7%	2,4%	15,3%	7,7%
Moldova 1	3,7%	4,4%	3,6%	4,8%	4,1%
Euro TV	23,0%	11,4%	13,3%	15,4%	15,4%
NIT	7,7%	6,2%	4,0%	8,1%	6,4%
TOTAL	11,3%	7,2%	6,6%	10,1%	8,6%

The TV channel most of all concerned with covering the electoral fight was Euro TV, which presented the most electoral news, with an average share of 13.8% in the news bulletins during those four weeks. It was followed by Pro TV with 8.6%, NIT with

5.8% and the national channel 1 with 3.6%. It was possible to notice that the TV channels broadcast electoral events to a higher extent in the first and last week of the electoral campaign, while the amount of electoral news was reduced in weeks 2 and 3.

TV Channel	Share of electoral news Week 1	Share of electoral news Week 2	Share of electoral news Week 3	Share of electoral news Week 4	Share of electoral news TOTAL
PRO TV	11,1%	6,3%	5,0%	12,8%	8,6%
Moldova 1	3,7%	3,2%	3,2%	4,8%	3,6%
Euro TV	17,4%	9,7%	13,1%	16,1%	13,8%
NIT	7,9%	6,6%	4,1%	5,3%	5,8%
TOTAL	8,5%	5,9%	5,8%	8,3%	7,0%

The TV channels preferred to place 57.8% of the electoral news in the first part of the news bulletins (first three pieces of news in the bulletin); this pattern was more common for the news bulletins of Euro TV, while Moldova

1 and NIT were the TV channels that placed more electoral news in the last part of the bulletins (after the tenth or even as the last piece of news - Moldova 1 = 22.2%, NIT = 29.1%.

No of order ¹	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	TOTAL
First news	23,8%	22,9%	12,5%	31,5%	23,0%
Second or third	45,0%	25,7%	43,8%	24,7%	34,8%
Fourth-tenth news	18,8%	37,1%	26,6%	39,7%	30,3%
After the tenth news	11,3%	11,4%	15,6%	1,4%	9,8%
Last news in the bulletin	1,3%	2,9%	1,6%	2,7%	2,1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Approximately three fourths (76.1%) of the electoral news approached political topics. It should be stressed here that 10.6% of the materials presented in the news bulletins had an

electoral-educational character, i.e. they showed how voting slips should be filled out, specified the date of the elections and the importance of exercising one's right to vote, etc. Moldova 1

1. The number of order shows the place of the electoral news in the news bulletin.

and NIT are the TV channels that paid larger attention (14.3% and 16.1%, respectively) to this informational-educative side; it should not be forgotten that, if not taking into account these educational-electoral materials, we will see that the number of news that covered the electoral campaign, the candidates, etc.

on these two TV channels is pretty low, and the coverage of the electoral campaign was rather sporadic. 13.3% of the analyzed news approached a more varied topical agenda (local public administration, economy, laws etc), but which presented or made reference to the electoral campaign or a candidate.

Topicality of news:	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	TOTAL
Political	82,6%	66,3%	89,1%	69,7%	76,1%
Educational-electoral information	3,5%	16,9%	6,3%	14,6%	10,6%
Local public administration	9,3%	4,8%	0,0%	4,5%	5,0%
Economic	0,0%	4,8%	0,0%	0,0%	1,2%
Law and Constitution	4,7%	3,6%	0,0%	0,0%	2,2%
Sports	0,0%	0,0%	4,7%	0,0%	0,9%
Politics, security, army	0,0%	3,6%	0,0%	11,2%	4,0%

Subjects of electoral news (all channels)

Subjects:	Frequency	Share	Positive context	Negative context	Neutral context
Central Electoral Commission	155	20,7%	14	5	136
Parliament, Speaker of Parliament	68	9,1%	15	10	43
Ursu Vasile	60	8,0%	28	22	10
Party "Moldova Noastră" Alliance"	39	5,2%	24	3	12
Local public administration	33	4,4%	13	6	14
Rusu Mircea	33	4,4%	13	3	17
Kirilov Valentin	32	4,3%	13	12	7
Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova	29	3,9%	3	8	18
President, President's Office	29	3,9%	5	22	2
Cernei Oleg	28	3,7%	13	8	7
Prime Minister, ministers, government officials	23	3,1%	8	0	15
Chirtoaca Dorin	22	2,9%	9	3	10
Sima Gheorghe	20	2,7%	7	6	7
Poia Valeriu	19	2,5%	2	9	8
Democratic Party of Moldova	14	1,9%	3	0	11
Mass media	14	1,9%	1	4	9
Muşuc Eduard	14	1,9%	1	6	7
Civil society – NGOs	13	1,7%	1	0	12
Justice, Constitutional Court, judges, lawyers	11	1,5%	0	6	5
Nikolenko Olga	11	1,5%	4	0	7
Popular Christian Democratic Party	10	1,3%	0	0	10
Social-Democratic Party of Moldova	10	1,3%	0	6	4
Soloviov Anatol	10	1,3%	0	3	7
Social-Liberal Party	9	1,2%	9	0	0
Citizens	9	1,2%	3	3	3
Liberal Party of Moldova	7	0,9%	1	0	6
Party representatives	6	0,8%	5	0	1
Police/army, security, financial guard, police	5	0,7%	0	1	4
Braghis Dumitru	5	0,7%	1	0	4
Republican Social-Political Movement "Ravnopravie"	4	0,5%	0	3	1
Popular Republican Party of Moldova	2	0,3%	0	0	2
Centrist Union	1	0,1%	0	0	1
Other internal agents	1	0,1%	0	1	0
Other state institutions	1	0,1%	1	0	0
Total	747	100%	197	150	400

The subject-matter in those 287 electoral pieces of news was first of all the Central Electoral Commission (subject in 20.7% of news) and the Parliament and Speaker of the Parliament (subject in 9.1% of the news). As shown below, about half of the electoral news referred to current power institutions or representatives. As to the candidates for the mayor's office, Vasile Ursu stands out with regards to the frequency with which he constituted the subject-matter of news, being directly mentioned as such in 60 cases. Also, the situations should not be overlooked in which news was being presented

about, for instance, the local administration, about the actions undertaken thereby, but, through the office held by Mr. Vasile Ursu (Acting General Mayor), implicit reference being made to his achievements/failures. One more thing to stress here is the support, at least at declarative level, that he enjoyed from the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova. The same type of judgment should also be applied with regards to the other candidates supported by one party or another, because the light in which those parties were presented had also an impact on the supported candidates.

Candidate	Appearances (total)	Share	Duration of appearance	Duration of intervention
Ursu Vasile	27	19,7%	00:11:19	00:02:38
Cernei Oleg	24	17,5%	00:16:59	00:10:37
Krilov Valentin	23	16,8%	00:13:03	00:08:51
Rusu Mircea	20	14,6%	00:10:10	00:06:20
Sima Gheorghe	15	10,9%	00:02:41	00:00:22
Chirtoacă Dorin	14	10,2%	00:15:48	00:11:07
Poia Valeriu	5	3,6%	00:04:10	00:02:52
Muşuc Eduard	4	2,9%	00:00:47	00:00:20
Nikolenko Olga	4	2,9%	00:00:56	00:00:29
Soloviov Anatol	1	0,7%	00:00:04	00:00:00
TOTAL	137	100%	01:15:57	00:43:36

Observations:

- **Valeriu Poia:** the candidate was not registered for the electoral run because the CEC had not validated the signature lists; he took CEC's actions to court twice, but each time CEC won.
- **Anatol Soloviov:** withdrew his candidature;

PRO TV Chişinău

- 14.4% of electoral news referred to the Party "«Moldova Noastră» Alliance", and the news favored the party;

- 8.9% of the electoral news referred to the President and President's Office, disfavoring them in all cases;
- Among the candidates, Mircea Rusu had the most appearances (5), and there was a tendency to favor him; Mircea Rusu also registered the highest durations concerning the duration of appearance in the frame (as image) and the duration of intervention, he being allocated about half of the total time of appearance and intervention of all candidates for the mayor's office.

Subjects of electoral news – Pro TV Chişinău

Subjects:	Frequency	Share	Positive context	Negative context	Neutral context
Central Electoral Commission	23	25,6%	5	0	18
Party "«Moldova Noastră» Alliance"	13	14,4%	10	1	2
President, President's Office	8	8,9%	0	8	0
Social-Liberal Party	6	6,7%	6	0	0
Parliament, Speaker of the Parliament	6	6,7%	0	1	5
Rusu Mircea	5	5,6%	3	0	2
Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova	3	3,3%	1	0	2
Prime Minister, ministers, government officials	3	3,3%	2	0	1
Ursu Vasile	3	3,3%	1	1	1
Democratic Party of Moldova	2	2,2%	0	0	2
Civil society – NGOs	2	2,2%	0	0	2
Poia Valeriu	2	2,2%	0	0	2
Soloviov Anatol	2	2,2%	0	0	2

Popular Christian Democratic Party	1	1,1%	0	0	1
Republican Social-Political Movement "Ravnopravie"	1	1,1%	0	0	1
Other internal agents	1	1,1%	0	1	0
Other state institutions	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Chirtoaca Dorin	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Krilov Valentin	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Musuc Eduard	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Sima Gheorghe	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Nikolenko Olga	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Cernei Oleg	1	1,1%	1	0	0
Party representatives	1	1,1%	0	0	1
Braghis Dumitru	1	1,1%	1	0	0
TOTAL	90	100%	36	12	42

Candidate	Appearances on Pro TV	Share	Duration of appearance	Duration of intervention
Ursu Vasile	1	8,3%	00:00:19	00:00:16
Cernei Oleg	1	8,3%	00:00:35	00:00:29
Krilov Valentin	1	8,3%	00:00:33	00:00:26
Mircea Rusu	5	41,7%	00:03:28	00:02:52
Sima Gheorghe	1	8,3%	00:00:24	00:00:22
Chirtoaca Dorin	1	8,3%	00:00:35	00:00:31
Poia Valeriu	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Musuc Eduard	1	8,3%	00:00:24	00:00:20
Nikolenko Olga	1	8,3%	00:00:32	00:00:29
Soloviov Anatol	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
TOTAL	12	100%	00:06:50	00:05:45

Moldova 1

- Electoral news was presented in many cases through the eyes of those in power, of central authorities: 30% of the electoral news referred to CEC, 15% to the Parliament, 9% to the Prime Minister (or other ministers), 4% to the local public administration. If the information presented about CEC was for the most part neutral, then materials about the other institutions/persons were in their favor (the number

of situations in which they were favored was higher than the number of situations in which they were not).

- As subjects of the news, Vasile Ursu, Dorin Chirtoacă, Oleg Cernei were mentioned most often (6), Vasile Ursu being favored in 4 of these materials, while Dorin Chirtoacă was favored just once, and Oleg Cernei twice.
- The latter were the ones that registered the highest durations of appearance and of intervention.

Subjects of electoral news – Moldova 1

Subjects:	Frequency	Share	Positive context	Negative context	Neutral context
Central Electoral Commission	30	30,0%	0	1	29
Parliament, Speaker of the Parliament	15	15,0%	4	0	11
Prime Minister, ministers, government officials	9	9,0%	4	0	5
Chirtoaca Dorin	6	6,0%	1	0	5
Ursu Vasile	6	6,0%	4	0	2
Cernei Oleg	6	6,0%	2	0	4
Local public administration	4	4,0%	4	0	0

Krilov Valentin	4	4,0%	2	0	2
Poia Valeriu	4	4,0%	0	0	4
Rusu Mircea	3	3,0%	0	0	3
Soloviov Anatol	3	3,0%	0	0	3
Liberal Party of Moldova	2	2,0%	0	0	2
Muşuc Eduard	2	2,0%	0	0	2
Sima Gheorghe	2	2,0%	0	0	2
Nikolenko Olga	2	2,0%	0	0	2
Party “«Moldova Noastră» Alliance”	1	1,0%	0	0	1
President, President’s Office	1	1,0%	0	0	1
TOTAL	100	100%	21	1	78

Candidate	Appearances Moldova 1	Share	Duration of appearance	Duration of intervention
Ursu Vasile	4	23,5%	00:00:50	00:00:00
Cernei Oleg	4	23,5%	00:03:56	00:03:03
Krilov Valentin	2	11,8%	00:01:13	00:01:13
Rusu Mircea	3	17,6%	00:00:24	00:00:00
Sima Gheorghe	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Chirtoaca Dorin	4	23,5%	00:03:09	00:02:31
Poia Valeriu	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Musuc Eduard	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Nikolenko Olga	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Soloviov Anatol	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
TOTAL	17	100%	00:09:32	00:06:47

Euro TV

- This is the TV channel which reflected most of all the electoral campaign and the candidates; they were many times even the subject of the presented news. As to favoring or disfavoring the candidates, the situations are divided as follows:
 - **Neutrality:** Vasile Ursu, Gheorghe Sima
 - **Favor:** Oleg Cernei, Mircea Rusu, Dorin Chirtoacă,

Olga Nikolenko

- **Disfavor:** Valentin Krilov, Eduard Muşuc, Valeriu Poia

- As to the appearance of candidates in the news bulletins, the most favored ones from this viewpoint were Oleg Cernei and Valentin Krilov with 19 appearances each. They also were allocated the highest time duration with regards to the appearance and intervention.

Subjects of electoral news – Euro TV

Subjects:	Frequency	Share	Positive context	Negative context	Neutral context
Central Electoral Commission	73	15,5%	6	3	64
Ursu Vasile	49	10,4%	23	21	5
Parliament, Speaker of Parliament	31	6,6%	4	9	18
Krilov Valentin	27	5,7%	8	14	5
Party “«Moldova Noastră» Alliance”	25	5,3%	14	2	9
Local public administration	25	5,3%	7	6	12
Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova	24	5,1%	0	8	16
Cernei Oleg	21	4,4%	10	6	5
Rusu Mircea	20	4,2%	9	3	8
Sima Gheorghe	17	3,6%	6	6	5
Chirtoacă Dorin	15	3,2%	6	4	5

President, President's Office	14	3,0%	0	14	0
Democratic Party of Moldova	12	2,5%	3	0	9
Mass media	12	2,5%	1	4	7
Justice, Constitutional Court, judges, lawyers	11	2,3%	0	6	5
Musuc Eduard	11	2,3%	0	6	5
Social Democratic Party of Moldova	10	2,1%	0	6	4
Citizens	9	1,9%	3	3	3
Nikolenko Olga	8	1,7%	3	0	5
Poia Valeriu	8	1,7%	2	6	0
Popular Christian Democratic Party	7	1,5%	0	0	7
Prime Minister, ministries, government officials	7	1,5%	0	0	7
Liberal Party of Moldova	5	1,1%	1	0	4
Police/army, security, financial guard, police	5	1,1%	0	1	4
Civil society – NGOs	5	1,1%	1	0	4
Party representatives	5	1,1%	5	0	0
Braghis Dumitru	4	0,8%	0	0	4
Social Liberal Party of Moldova	3	0,6%	3	0	0
Republican Social-Political Movement "Ravnopravie"	3	0,6%	0	3	0
Soloviov Anatol	3	0,6%	0	3	0
Popular Republican Party of Moldova	2	0,4%	0	0	2
Centrist Union	1	0,2%	0	0	1
TOTAL	472	100%	115	134	223

Candidate	Appearances Euro TV	Share	Duration of appearance	Duration of intervention
Ursu Vasile	14	14,1%	00:08:22	00:02:22
Cernei Oleg	19	19,2%	00:12:28	00:07:05
Krilov Valentin	19	19,2%	00:11:12	00:07:12
Rusu Mircea	12	12,1%	00:06:18	00:03:28
Sima Gheorghe	14	14,1%	00:02:17	00:00:00
Chirtoaca Dorin	9	9,1%	00:12:04	00:08:05
Poia Valeriu	5	5,1%	00:04:10	00:02:52
Musuc Eduard	3	3,0%	00:00:23	00:00:00
Nikolenko Olga	3	3,0%	00:00:24	00:00:00
Soloviov Anatol	1	1,0%	00:00:04	00:00:00
TOTAL	99	100%	00:57:42	00:31:04

NIT

- The electoral news was presented in many situations through the eyes of those in power, of central authorities: 34.1% of the electoral news referred to the CEC, 18.8% to the Parliament, 7.1% to the President and the President's Office, 4.7% to the Prime Minister and ministers. If the information presented about the CEC was for the most part neutral, then the materials about the other institutions/ persons favored them (the number of situations in which they were favored was higher than the number of situations in which they were not). ;
- Vasile Ursu appeared in 8 out of 9 candidate appearances;

Subjects of electoral news – NIT

Subjects:	Frequency	Share	Positive context	Negative context	Neutral context
Central Electoral Commission	29	34,1%	3	0	26
Parliament, Speaker of Parliament	16	18,8%	7	0	9

President, President's Office	6	7,1%	5	0	1
Civil society – NGOs	6	7,1%	0	0	6
Rusu Mircea	5	5,9%	1	0	4
Poia Valeriu	5	5,9%	0	3	2
Prime Minister, ministers, government officials	4	4,7%	2	0	2
Local public administration	4	4,7%	2	0	2
Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova	2	2,4%	2	0	0
Popular Christian Democratic Party	2	2,4%	0	0	2
Mass media	2	2,4%	0	0	2
Ursu Vasile	2	2,4%	0	0	2
Soloviov Anatol	2	2,4%	0	0	2
TOTAL	85	100%	22	3	60

Candidates	Appearances NIT	Share	Duration of appearance	Duration of intervention
Ursu Vasile	8	88,9%	00:01:48	00:00:00
Oleg Cernei	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Krilov Valentin	1	11,1%	00:00:05	00:00:00
Rusu Mircea	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Sima Gheorghe	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Chirtoaca Dorin	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Poia Valeriu	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Musuc Eduard	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Nikolenko Olga	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
Soloviov Anatol	0	0,0%	00:00:00	00:00:00
TOTAL	9	100%	00:01:53	00:00:00

Alla STOEVA

Manipulation of Consciousness in Transnistrian Mass Media

Presently propaganda is used more and more in the Transnistrian Moldavian Republic (TMR) by means of mass-media. This is connected with the efforts of political leaders to hold their ground, as well as with the economic situation of the state, and as a consequence of the unpremeditated implantation of western ideology.

In order to prove the mentioned facts, I examined a major issue that was covered two years ago in the Transnistrian newspapers. The matter concerns the referendum on private ownership on land, organized in 2003.

As an example of mass-media activity I analyzed the newspapers "Pridnestrovie", "Dnestrovski Curier" and materials of the "Olvia-press" news agency.

These media outlets are considered state-owned; that is why their position is clear: the referendum is necessary. The first reference to the referendum appeared only in February 2003, two months before the mentioned event. It is specified from the very beginning that the promotion campaign started too late: "until April 6, the day of the referendum on private ownership of the land, a little more than a month is left, but the population knows still very little about the issue and is not aware of the pros and cons of the issues on which it is supposed to vote"¹ – the words belong to the Speaker of the Parliament

1. AI „Olvia-press”, 27.02.2003.

TMR, Grigori Maracuța. A specific role in eliminating the “information vacuum” is given to local mass media.

Probably for this purpose, for a favorable result of the referendum, mass media use a policy of objective presentation. There are publications in which the real situation in the agricultural sector of the region is described: “Tens of thousand of hectares of land are practically not processed, the natural fertility of soils decreases on many lots – they degrade. The lot owners can’t exercise entirely their right on these lots”².

There were declarations that referred directly to the inefficiency of the applied reforms. For example: “The existing mechanisms of land ownership, use and disposal limit its efficient use. Tens of thousands of hectares are fallowed, the soil fertility decreases”³.

There were ideas in the mass media according to which the responsibility for the republic’s “fate” belongs to the citizens.

Thus, the main conclusion of all the quoted articles is: the referendum is necessary for the re-establishment of the agricultural sector and its efficient further development.

It is curious that before preparations for the referendum started, the mass media never mentioned anything about the negative policy of the local executive branch in the agricultural sector. This makes us think that the “procedure of objective presentation” was deliberate.

We grounded our examination on three known methods of manipulation in mass media.

The first is the direct lie, when mass media replace “political censorship” (obvious misrepresentation of information) with “psychoanalytical” censorship.

As long as the referendum was being prepared, the authorities focused on the fact that there was already private ownership of land: rent. This is characterized as a “successful experience of private enterprise development”⁴. Here is the next sentence from the quoted article: „But the amplitude of this positive tendency is not impressive.”⁵ The first phrase convinces the readers that the situation is not so bad and that the already implemented reforms improve the situation. At the same time, the second sentence contradicts the first one. Thus, readers are led to believe that new reforms are necessary.

One more example. In one of the articles of the “Olvia-press” news agency it is said: “The future voting, planned for April 6, provoked debates in the press”. But there were no

debates in the press. The published articles expressed a single point of view: the referendum is necessary.

The second method of manipulation is keeping silence as a form of indirect lie.

When a respectable politician, a scientist or a newspaper keeps silent regarding true data that they know, allowing the accreditation or spreading of a wrong opinion about an important issue for the society, which perplexes readers even more than a direct lie.

For example the differences that appeared between the responsible departments for the agricultural sector among experts of different specialties – veterinarians, zoo-technicians, subordinated to different structures, liquidation of the Ministry of Agriculture – everything contributed to the degrading of agriculture. In one of the articles the reduction in the number of animals at one of the farms, provoked by such a policy, is described as follows: “Formally, you cannot talk about reducing the number of horned cattle, because it went from state-owned enterprises into privately-owned enterprises”⁶. In other words, the problems that led to losing animals were not mentioned at all. Instead, the privatization is presented as a reasonable solution for this critical situation.

In the same manner, declarations of deputies were often quoted on the website of “Olvia-press”, according to which they used the experience of neighboring states when they prepared the referendum, especially the experience of Ukraine. It was asserted that in all neighboring countries different forms of land ownership had been applied for many years, which had economic effects. But the consequences of these “effects” were not described. In reality the privatization of arable land was not allowed in Ukraine. Only rent was allowed. In Transnistria the land rent has already been allowed for a long time, but mass-media says that “half-implemented reforms in some farms, the development of rent relationships did not ensure the expected effect”⁷.

One more example of failure to report fully: “According to Grigori Maracuța the visits made in towns and districts of Transnistria showed that the workers from villages were not against introducing one more form of land ownership”⁸. But no concrete facts are indicated in the article that would confirm the positive attitude of the population towards introducing private land ownership. Would this “positive attitude” exist at all, if the referendum had not taken place because of the citizens’ absenteeism?

2. „Pridnestrovie”, 17.02.2003.

3. „Olvia-press” NA, 06.03.2003

4. “Olvia-press” NA, „The Political Aspect of the Referendum”. 26.03.2003

5. “Olvia-press” NA, „The Political Aspect of the Referendum”. 26.03.2003

6. “Pridnestrovie”, “Live and work in a new way. Issues of the Agricultural-Industrial Sector”, 08.04.2005

7. “Pridnestrovie”, “Live and work in a new way. Issues of the Agricultural-Industrial Sector”, 08.04.2005

8. „Olvia-press” NA, 17.03.2003

One More Manipulation Method – False Wisdom

The deputies promoted the slogan “the people should save their own land”. As I mentioned before, articles of a “denouncing” character started to be published two months before the referendum. The authors attributed the degradation of Transnistrian agriculture to the fact that the implemented reforms did not have the expected effects, that the land remains mainly unused and that the referendum will finally bring our legislation to the level of CIS countries legislation. For example, such an article appeared initially on the “Olvia-press” website and then in the newspaper “Dnestrovski curier” of February 7: “The market economy system is incompatible with the absolute monopoly in any economic sphere, including capital goods... Agricultural producers are placed in unequal economic conditions if compared with other sectors of production that recognize the variety of ownership forms. The actual situation of the agricultural workers (maintaining the monopoly of state ownership of the land) can hardly be called ideal, so that the conservation of the existing agricultural relationship is desired.

As a rule such affirmations finish with urging coming from the deputies “to save their own land”, focusing on the word “own”. At the same time, only 10% of the Transnistrian population are land owners. They are renters. They will vote for private land ownership because this makes them land owners automatically. All the rest (about 90%) will come to the polls with nothing and leave with nothing. And even less than nothing, if they vote for changes in the Constitution, i.e. for the introduction of private land ownership. Voting “for,” they will simply confirm the rights of those that obtained land ownership (i.e. of those 10%). Thus, the people do not have their OWN land.

Starting with the related facts, we can say that the destruction of kolkhozes was mainly focused on obtaining a positive result in the referendum. At the same time the efficiency of land ownership has not been confirmed anywhere.

Anyway, mass-media and namely the news agency “Olvia-press” in its declarations repeatedly mentions that “the model and land privatization rules were developed long ago in the republic. The Ministry of Agriculture did this, taking as a basis the experience of Ukraine. There the land reform was the basis for reforming the agricultural sector and it led to the creation of different land property forms”.⁹

In Transnistria the renter does not pay for the irrigation system and does not receive state subsidies for agricultural

work. At the same time, the irrigation system needs to be repaired and the equipment is almost impossible to use. As a result, the renter sells agricultural machines that still work and the unprocessed land remains not used. There are examples of successful renting of land: land lots in Caragaş and Slobozia. But these are exceptions. Moreover, the real price of a hectare of land amounts to 40-120 thousand US Dollars. Here the price is of 200-300 US Dollars.

The articles that were published after the failure of the referendum are also interesting. Most of all they quote the local leaders. One can assume that such an action liberates the press from the responsibility for the fact that until April 6 the referendum was referred to by the press only as a good thing for the republic. The leaders contradict themselves in the interviews to newspapers and the “Olvia-press” agency. For example, until April 6 it was asserted that a serious explanatory work was performed among the population. After the failure of the referendum the press publishes comments like: “Evaluating the preliminary results of voting, Galina Antiufeeva mentioned that one of the causes of the referendum’s failure is insufficient explanatory work performed by deputies and representatives of the state administration”.¹⁰

The article published in the newspaper “Dnestrovski curier” after the referendum failure is convincing. “The issue is discussed in the upper levels and one month before the referendum most of the electorate does not even know that a referendum will take place, is not aware of the purpose and essence of the question that is being voted on, and moreover does not know what will be the consequences of the land privatization in “our” version”.¹¹ These are, again, some very daring declarations by the journalists, taking into account the fact that until April 6 this newspaper actively participated in the “presentation” of all the aspects of the referendum. And further on: “It was proved that the referendum was not conducted on the phone and actions like „we agreed, we called, we asked them, we gathered, we calculated, we presented” are not valid. The issue is too serious and the opinions of most of the electorate are too “polarized”. Russia had to labor over its difficulties to solve the problem of land relations for 150 years, going through 3 revolutions and through a series of reforms and restructurings, while we decided to solve everything in one day, not lifting a finger.

Thus, we have presented all three manipulation methods. Another problem would be their efficiency in a certain situation. On April 6, 2003 the referendum did not take place. But its presentation is just an example of manipulation in mass media.

9. “Olvia-press” NA, 01.03.2003

10. “Olvia-press” NA, 07.04.2003

11. “Dnestrovski curier”, “It is Early to Give Advice and Late to Decide”, 09.04.2003

Gheorghe BUDEANU,
Project coordinator "The Two Banks of the Nistru River: Journalists Are Shaking Hands"

Two Banks of the Nistru River: Journalists Are And Will Be Shaking Hands

For two years the Center "For Media" implemented the project "The two banks of Nistru river: journalists are shaking hands" together with the daily „*Timpul de dimineață*” (Morning time), independent weeklies "Novaia Gazeta" (New newspaper) from Tighina and "Dobrii Deni" (Good Day) from Ribnița, towns situated in the secessionist region of the republic. The first part of the project took place in May 2003 – June 2004. The project was continued for one more year with the support of the PRESS NOW Foundation from the Netherlands.

Thus we, the journalists from different Russian or Romanian-language media institutions involved in the program, tried to re-establish relationships with our colleagues from the secessionist East of the Republic of Moldova. The self-proclaimed Transnistrian Republic that appeared after the collapse of the USSR and after the war in 1992 became a reality. The war took place with the support of Russian military forces and the regime in Tiraspol was arranged by Moscow. Unfortunately the government from Chișinău, including three presidents of the state: Mircea Snegur, Petru Lucinschi and Vladimir Voronin, have not managed to solve the problem of separatism between the two banks of the Nistru river for 15 years. Moreover, mass media has been used substantially within this period to inspire and promote the ill-feeling between the "Moldovan nationalists" and "Transnistrian separatists". It seems that the imperial Russian forces planned something like that in their post-soviet scenario. Now a considerable part of the press from the right bank of the Nistru river neglects almost completely what happens in the secessionist area. Many media institutions from "over there" continue to inseminate hate for the "neighbor enemy" – the Republic of Moldova.

We, especially the journalists from the newspaper "TIMPUL de dimineață", have experience in working in a free press and want to consolidate most of the journalistic forces on the right bank of Nistru river through this project. We wished to mobilize them to collaborate with the media representatives from the left bank of Nistru river so that together, they can inform correctly the population and support the resolution of the conflict between Chișinău and Tiraspol. At the same time, by our actions we wanted to teach a lesson: journalists should have a common attitude about gathering information. Journalists from Chișinău face serious difficulties obtaining

correct information if they go to the other bank of the Nistru river. Of course, we intended to sustain the first steps made for obtaining freedom of expression and creation of civil society through meetings and discussions at round tables with our Transnistrian colleagues.

The truth is that we launched this project not only to diminish ill-feeling between the two banks of the Nistru river and promote a professional fraternal spirit among the journalists situated on different sides, but also to organize common trips with journalists from different media institutions to the secessionist region, with the objective to inform society as accurately as possible about what is happening and what the people from "over there" think...

It is important that for the last few years the separatist, criminal regime from Tiraspol has been discussed and the international organizations, especially within OSCE and EU, have taken a stance on the issue. It seems that also the president of the Republic of Moldova, V. Voronin – although he was promoted to presidency by a Communist party that used to be and probably still is pro-Russian – has a tough position towards the regime in Tiraspol supported by Moscow. His gesture of not signing the Kozak Memorandum remains memorable. This was a version of federalization of the Republic of Moldova, in which Russia's interests prevailed. We would like to think that together with the common actions of international organizations and healthy, democratic forces from the two banks of the Nistru river, the Transnistrian conflict will be solved. Besides, our project, launched in early 2003, expresses the essence of the program that appeared much later – Transnistria **Democratization**. This concerns the three "D's" that also include **Demilitarization** and **Decriminalization** of the secessionist region.

The first part of the project (May 2003 – June 2004) was comprised of trips to towns and district centers of the secessionist region, as well as of the Gagauz-Yeri Territorial Administrative Unit (TAU). We did not have trips to Tiraspol, because we were not accepted when we planned the project actions. I will mention just the visited newspapers and the subject of discussions at the round tables, organized by their employees.

Dubăsari. The newspaper "Zarea Pridnestrovia" (**Dawn of Transnistria**) (editor-in-chief Viktor Bognibov) - a body of the local state administration: "Independent press in the society in transition. The mentality of the journalist in transition – from state press or party press to independent press".

Rîbnița. Newspaper “*Dobrii deni*” (*Good Day*) (editor-in-chief Serghei Kotovski), the first independent publication in Transnistria: “The role of journalists in diminishing the ill-feeling among the citizens from the two banks of the Nistru river”.

Camenca. Newspaper „*Dnestr*” (editor-in-chief Agripina Lucaș), a body of the local state administration: “Ways of collaboration among the journalists from the left and the right bank of the Nistru river”.

Tighina. Independent weekly “*Novaia gazeta*” (*New Newspaper*) (editor-in-chief Grigori Volovoi): “Informing or misinforming through mass-media on the Chișinău-Tiraspol relationship within the Transnistrian conflict”.

Comrat. Newspaper “*Vesti Gagauzii*” (*Gagausian News*) (editor-in-chief Dmitri Marinov), a body of central state administration of the Gagausian autonomous region: “Identifying obstacles in journalists documentation in the trips to the territory of Gagauz-Yeri TAU”.

Grigoriopol. Newspaper “*Drujba*” (*Friendship*) (editor-in-chief Zinaida Nerubașcenko), body of the local state administration: “The role of mass-media in supporting civil society”.

Slobozia. Newspaper “*Slobodzeiskie vesti*” (*Slobozia News*) (editor-in-chief Oleg Nastasenکو), body of the local state administration: “Journalistic solidarity: a primary principle among media representatives wherever they are”.

Chișinău. Independent weekly “*Timpul de dimineață*” (*Morning Time*) (director - Constantin Tănase): “The independent Newspaper. Ways to launch and maintain its status in actual conditions”.

In the second part of the project (July 2004 – June 2005) we planned two trips to each of the district centers: Tighina and Tiraspol. Their purpose was to organize more meetings with the population from the secessionist region for journalists, so they could inform the society on what simple people think on the present and future of the region. Having already established some collaborative relationships with our Transnistrian colleagues, we always discussed the problems of the press in our society as well. We think that another success of the program in the second part of the project were the three seminars.

Rîbnița. Here we discussed “The Journalistic Fraternity – a Way of promoting and Defending the Mass-Media Independence” together with journalists from Chișinău and Dubăsari, from local newspapers “*Dobrii deni*” and “*Gomin*”.

“*Dobrii deni*,” together with “*Novaia gazeta*” from Tighina, “*Profsoiuznîe vesti*” (Syndicate News) and „*Adevărul nistrean*” (Transnistrian Truth) from Tiraspol are editorial teams where we always found support and understanding. At “*Dobrii deni*,” conducted by Serghei Kotovski, a former employee at “*Vecernii Kișinev*” (Evening Chișinău), you always find a working civilized atmosphere. Each time we found there

understanding and support. Even if the seminar took place during the scandal at the “Doroțcaia control point” in the security zone, it ran into no specific problems, a fact that made us think that if you want, you can do good things.

In order to bring concrete examples into our discussions, we invited Mr. Mircea Surdu, the President of the Anti-Censorship Committee of the journalists of the Company “*Teleradio-Moldova*” to the seminar. He presented a documentary film about the protests of the journalists against the government from Chișinău. Mrs. Svetlana Kotovski, director of the NGO „*Kombrig*,” and the founder of the independent newspaper “*Dobrii deni*,” spoke about the problems that the editorial team had with the local administration and the administration from Tiraspol, who took all possible measures to impede the distribution of the weekly “*Dobrii deni*.” The conclusions of the seminar, made by the moderators Viktoria Pașențeva (“*Dobrii deni*”) and Radu Benea (“*Free Europe*”), were that we needed to find ways to support each other when the authorities try to punish unfairly the free press.

Tiraspol. Actually, as we implemented the first and the second part of the project “The two banks of the Nistru river: the journalists are shaking hands” we had to confront many barriers at crossing the “Transnistrian border” with the local, as well as Tiraspol authorities.

Officially, the authorities from Tiraspol can allow the Moldovan journalists to go to the self-proclaimed republic only if they are accredited. But in order to obtain such accreditation, especially for a group of journalists, it is like having electricity interrupted right when you need to print tomorrow’s newspaper in order to send it to the printing house. However, together with the project assistant, Natalia Cojocaru from the newspaper „*Timpul*,” we went to the Information and Telecommunications Ministry in Tiraspol and we met Svetlana Gavrilova and Serghei Zaichenko. Although they did not reject our proposals, they advised us to submit official requests and explain exactly what we wanted to do. Through them, we even managed to speak with the Minister of Information and Telecommunications from Tiraspol, Mr. Vladimir Beleaev, after a press conference that he held. He told us that he was aware of the journalists’ visits from Chișinău to Transnistria in the framework of the project “The two banks of the Nistru river: journalists are shaking hands” and that he even read the magazine “*Two Banks*,” published within the project. The fact that after we insisted, we managed to organize a seminar in Tiraspol says that our project is beginning to accomplish its purpose. Moreover, we did not organize the seminar with the help of our colleagues from “*Adevărul nistrean*,” with whom we had closer a relationship, but with journalists from “*Profsoiuznîe vesti*,” a publication of the syndicates from the separatist region. It took place in the “*Nistru*” hotel and had as experts Mrs. Lidia Bobîna, a known journalist from Chișinău, and Mrs. Ludmila Koval, editor-in-chief of the “*Profsoiuznîe vesti*” from Tiraspol. Because of the

lack of space we mention only the Transnistrian colleagues that were most active in discussions: Luiza Doroşenko, president of the Creation Union of Young Journalists from Transnistria, Iakov Fisenko, reporter at "Pridnestrovie" newspaper, Leonid Cojuhari, reporter at "Dnestrovskaja pravda" newspaper, Elena Kukol, vice editor-in-chief of the "Profsoiuznîe vesti" newspaper, Vladimir Koval, vice editor-in-chief of the "Adevărul Nistrean" newspaper, Angelica Jelnova, editor at the "Radio Jelannoe", and Victoria Paşenţeva, journalist at "Dobrii deni" newspaper from Rîbniţa, Grigori Volovoi, editor-in-chief, Nikolae Fasolea, vice editor-in-chief, and Jana Miazina, journalist at "Novaia gazeta" from Tighina. The conclusion of the discussions: we should not use the press tribune we represent to aggravate the conflict between the two banks of the Nistru river, but try to diminish this tension through what we write and to collaborate more intensely in order to sustain each other in defending freedom of expression, because both in Tiraspol and Chişinău the tendency to constrain freedom of expression through the judiciary is strong. And when we do not have a good Press Law and when the judicial is controlled by state structures, the press must defend itself alone.

Chişinău. Actually, in May 2005 the second and last seminar within the project "The two banks of the Nistru river: journalists are shaking hands" took place in Chişinău. Its topic was "The Role of Journalists from all over the Republic of Moldova in diminishing the conflict in the region of the Stability Pact in South-Eastern Europe". Besides mass-media representatives such as Mr. Nicolae Chirtoacă, independent political analyst, Vasile Spinei, the president of the „Acces-info" Center and Elena Kukol, vice editor-in-chief of the "Profsoiuznîe vesti" newspaper from Tiraspol, guests like Claus Neukirch, responsible for press of the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Moldova, and Petru Gligor, main specialist at the Ministry of Reintegration of the Republic of Moldova, participated in the seminar.

After the seminar, a concluding meeting of our project took place. Most speakers had the opinion that the project was successful; its actions are known on both banks of the Nistru River. A large group of journalists exists already that specializes in reflecting the reality on the other bank of Nistru river, respecting the principles of journalistic deontology. Eight prizes were awarded to the journalists who wrote the best articles after their trips to the other bank of the Nistru river, as well as to those, who were most active for the period of the project. On the left bank of the Nistru river: the first prize – the team of the "Dobrii deni" newspaper from Rîbniţa; the second prize - Ludmila Koval, *ziarul* "Profsoiuznîe vesti" newspaper from Tiraspol; the third prize – Vera Bondareva, "Dnestrovskaja pravda" newspaper from Tiraspol; and the fourth prize – Serghei Vulpe, local journalist at the "Pridnestrovie" radio station, Camenca. On the right bank of the Nistru river: the first prize - Ana Meleca, "Nezavisimaia Moldova"; the second prize – Tatiana Lupaşcu, "Antena C" radio

station; the third prize – Elena Cioina, "Europa liberă" radio station; and the fourth prize – Valerie Volontir, "Noi" magazine.

We would like to mention that after the first part of the project, in May 2004, on Press Freedom Day, six other prizes were awarded for active participation in the activities of "Two banks of the Nistru river: the journalists are shaking hands". On the left bank of the Nistru river: the first prize - "Dobrii deni" weekly from Rîbniţa; the second prize - Anatol Gaina, "Slobodzeiskie vesti" newspaper from Slobozia; the third prize – Jana Miazina, "Novaia gazeta" weekly from Tighina; On the right bank of the Nistru river: the first prize - Vasile Ciobanu, National Radio; the second prize - Ion Cernei, DECA-press; and the third prize – Natalia Răileanu, "Democraţia" newspaper.

For these journalists, as well as for the numerous group from the left side of the Nistru river that accompanied us almost continually, the meetings with people from Transnistria remained memorable. From now on they can go anytime to the "Lucian Blaga" High School that teaches in Romanian, to the Journalism faculty of the University "Taras Şevcenko" or to the Union of Defenders of Transnistria from Tiraspol, to Tatiana Samîghina, the vice-president of the local district administration or to the artist Gheorghe Sultan from Sucleia, Slobozia district, to the school or mayor from Corjova or to the Iovvs from Dubăsari, to Delacău village, Grigoriopol district, to Ivan Bîstrov, to the chief doctor of the "Dnestr" health resort, to the local hospital, to the school from Podoima or to the one in Raşcov, Camenca district, to the cement plant or to the "Evrica" high school in Rîbniţa, to the University from Comrat, to the river Port, to the "Alexandru cel Bun" high school, to the Police Station from Tighina, as well as to Aleksandr Posudnevski, the chief of the town administration of this town of Moldovan citadel.

Within the implementation of the project the relationships between Chişinău and Tiraspol remain tense. The "phone war" is especially memorable, as well as the conflict over the Romanian schools from Transnistria and the tragedy of peasants from Transnistrian villages under the control of Chişinău who are not allowed to go to their own property beyond the highway Tiraspol-Rîbniţa.

The tension worried our colleagues from "over there", who are always under pressure, fearing the oppression of the Smirnov regime. This could be seen especially in Dubăsari and Grigoriopol. That is why in some cases we did not advertise the topics of our discussions at the round tables. It's a pity. Under ordinary conditions, what has been achieved with "The two banks of the Nistru river: journalists are shaking hands" would be the long-lasting basis for quickening journalistic activity and fraternity in this conflict region, as well as stagnation in press freedom. A lot of materials were prepared and written after our visits on the other bank of the Nistru river. Moreover, "Timpul", "Nezavisimaia Moldova" and "Antena C" radio station

opened a special section. At the same time the Center "FOR Media" published a bilingual newsletter "For Media" as part of the project. The situation of the Transnistrian press and the Gagauzian press, as well as many opinions on sustaining free press and promoting freedom of expression in the Republic of Moldova were presented in its four issues. We send these newsletters to newspapers, media NGOs and to institutions interested in addressing the Transnistrian conflict both on the right and left banks of the Nistru river. While preparing a leaflet to present to the journalists who participated in the project's actions, the Center "FOR Media" accumulated a data base. It can be given to any editorial staff interested in collaborating with journalists from the opposite bank of the Nistru river. However, attaining the objectives mentioned above was possible only through an honest engagement of a large number of journalists from the right bank of the Nistru river. I insist on mentioning some of them: almost all the team of "Timpul" newspaper; Vasile Ciobanu, editor at the National Radio (now at "Vocea Basarabiei"); Vasile Spinei, president of the "Acces-info" Center; Valeriu Volontir, editor-in-chief of "Noi" magazine; Elena Erhan, reporter at "Info-prim" News Agency; Ion Cernei, reporter at "DECA-press" News Agency; Tatiana Lupașcu, reporter at the "Antena C" Chișinău municipal

radio station; Natalia Calac, reporter at the "Infotag" News Agency; Eugen Gheorghită, chief of section at "Dezvoltarea" Newspaper; Gabriel Călin, journalist at the „Accente” Newspaper; Natalia Răileanu, journalist at the „Democrația” Newspaper; Vitalie Sprinceană, journalist at the "Opinia"; Elena Sazin, reporter at the "Antena C" Chișinău municipal radio station; Natalia Zaharescu, reporter at the "Vocea Basarabiei" radio station; Elena Cioina, reporter at the "Free Europe" radio station; Diana Lungu, journalist at the government newspaper "Moldova suverană"; Oxana Ghenciu, journalist at the "Ziarul orașului"; Ion Ciumeică, editor-in-chief of the weekly "Info business" from Cimișlia; Natalia Croitoru, Reporter.md News Agency; Maria Praporșic, reporter at the daily "Flux"; Radu Benea, reporter at "Free Europe"; Irina Nechit, vice editor-in-chief at "Opinia" Newspaper, Ana Meleca, section chief at the government newspaper "Nezavisimaia Moldova"; Oleg Cristal, journalist at the "Info-prim" News Agency; Alina Mazureac (Radu), director, and Aneta Grosu, editor-in-chief of the independent publication "Ziarul de gardă"; Lidia Bobină, journalist at "Jurnalul de Chișinău" etc. I thank them all. The professional collaboration among the journalists on the two banks of the Nistru river shall continue, no matter what the political fate of Transnistria.

Valeriu VASILICĂ,
director Info-Prim Neo

The "Info-Prim" Lesson at the School of Transforming Moldovan Press Into A Public Institution

The municipal News Agency "Info-Prim" has been liquidated for political reasons. In order to understand these reasons, the "Info-Prim lesson" should be analyzed in the general context of the Moldovan press and the municipal press as a particular phenomenon.

No matter what is said now, the foundation of the municipal media holding in 1998, with all its sins of becoming bigger, was a remarkable phenomenon. The former components of the media-holding, even after its liquidation, are among the few information sources from the Republic of Moldova that say something besides what is said by the unanimous chorus of the official press and of the press affiliated with the government and, for some time, by the "constructive" opposition. Just imagine that there was no Antena C radio station, no Euro TV television channel and, why not, no "Info Prim" News Agency for all this time. Imagine and ask yourself honestly if the capital city would have maintained its status of the ultimate bastion of democracy within all this period without these

institutions.

From the point of view of the governing party it is not worth coming into collision with the whole of Europe in order to maintain total control over the National Radio and Television. The public money allocated to the company cannot be redeemed, the budget being increased suddenly by two or three times. The efforts and the resources used to attract private press institutions by the government, many times through blackmail and corruption, were in vain if the municipal press institutions had remained free and united.

The holding liquidation, as a structure over the municipal press, was almost unnoticeable by the public. But the action was very much similar to the one from the fairy tale, where the father wanted to teach his sons to live cooperatively. Do you remember: he gave them a broom to break and not one of the three sons could do it. Having pulled out a stick at a time, there was nothing left of the broom. In the spring-summer of 2004, Antena C and Euro TV were pulled out of the "broom". On the one hand by the Broadcasting Coordinating Council, on the other hand by some political forces that were already disputing who takes which channel. And all of

them used the voting machine from the Municipal Council. Does anybody remember the pretext for which the activity of these institutions was sustained for two months? Has any radio station or television channel before been obliged to go through the registration procedure as a legal entity? No. Up to the end they were unable to liquidate Antena C and Euro TV. For many reasons. Inexperienced and greedy, those who considered themselves the new sovereigns of Chişinău made mistakes, infringed laws and norms and had to cede to the pressure of the employees' protests who even used hunger-strike. But most important, they did so under the strong and univocal pressures of the international community.

Then it was the turn of the "Info Prim" and "Capitala" newspapers in the Romanian and Russian "sticks". The "Capitala" was "broken", changing its management, appearance and orientation. They succeeded also because the "Info Prim" News Agency was under liquidation at the same time and about 20 employees were left on the street. The colleagues from "Capitala" were being taught an "open lesson" of intimidation, so they could understand what can happen to them in case "they are not obedient". Having been separated, the agency was broken, destroyed, liquidated. We will see later how. Until then let's mention that the destroying actions of the municipal press are not over yet. I am decidedly persuaded that they will very soon revert to Antena C and Euro TV. The Communist government does not forgive anybody's defeat. An eventual scenario could be launched soon, even from the Parliament, where a commission managed by the vice-speaker, Iurie Roşca, is said to be developing a Broadcasting Code. It is also said that the mentioned Code will consider the existence of local public radio stations and television channels irrational. And as there exists nothing that would be more public and freer than those two institutions, it is clear that somebody is aiming at them. It is also said that right next to that commission you could look for those wishing to get channel 23 the national coverage used by Euro TV. The voting machine of the Chisinau Municipal Council (CMC) will take care of the details.

The described situation is the general situation of the Moldovan mass media. Since the Communist government came to power, the press has been polarized according to political criteria, the polarization having a disproportional character, asymmetric, with a negative impact on media pluralism and on the society in transition as a whole. At one pole the governing regime has established a tough control over the public and governmental press and has attracted on its side many press institutions with a formal independent status by using administrative levers, public resources and a large range of pressures and facilities for that purpose. All these constitute nowadays an ideological media-holding, with editorial policies conducted from a single center. On the opposite pole, but with lower potential and coverage, 2-3 periodical publications, 2-3 radio stations and TV channels of a pluralist character

are maintained in reserve in order to create a semblance of democracy. Through open and hidden policies they have no access to the advertising market, are harassed and brought to bankruptcy through law suits for the presumed damage of the dignity and honor of politicians and businessmen, close to the government.

The Political Character of the Liquidation

The above mentioned mechanisms are strictly political. So that even the liquidation effect of the "Info-Prim" Agency is eminently political. The unconditional elimination of an information source, having a certain role and a certain place in the informational circuit of the society, could be defined only in this way. Many experts, opinion leaders, representatives of mass-media and of civil society expressed their regret regarding the liquidation, and especially regarding the procedure and context of liquidation, distinguishing the political character and the negative impact of the event. The assessment given by the OSCE Mission in Moldova is representative in this context, which "considered the Info-Prim services very useful. The disappearance of the Info-Prim Agency from the mass-media market... will result in a continuous decreasing of pluralism in the Moldovan press". Decreasing of pluralism, reduced in both purpose and effect, is also a political characteristic of the society and of the regime that governs it.

The economic "arguments" the "liquidators" brought us do not stand up. They have no foundation, the Agency having operated with the smallest budget of all the municipal media institutions. Instead, the Agency rendered a large series of information services to population and many press institutions. If the Agency has earned less than it could have earned for this period, this was due to the fact that the Founder did not approve for more than one year the elementary regulations: personnel positions, financial plan, fees for services and salaries, etc., thus infringing upon three decisions of its own concerning the establishment of the Agency as a public institution. It was a period of more than one year of harassment and political, economic and social intimidation of employees of the Agency, because no economic body can operate without economic instruments. At the core, liquidation was pursued all the time, this intention being made public many times. But only on April 4, 2005, when the two fractions: the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (CPRM) and the Christian Democratic Popular Party (CDPP) got together on the top, were there enough votes to do so. The interests met and materialized through voting.

The declarations made by the representatives of the two fractions after the liquidation of the Agency are without support, according to which the Agency was a "pocket" one and had an "odious" product. Yes, we made mistakes as everybody does. We were weak, partially explainable because of the previously

mentioned economic conditions. But I assert with full responsibility that neither the last CMC structure, nor the actual one, neither the commissions, nor its fractions have examined the Agency's activity and have submitted requirements regarding the editorial policy or professionalism of employees.

Those few critical personal opinions, very sporadically formulated by some communist counselors over seven years, cannot be considered a motivated and official assessment. But the fact that even the Communist counselor, Mira, as well as the counselor, Roșcovan, before being excluded from the CDPP fraction, invoked political arguments not presented during the meeting when the liquidation of the Agency was decided, uncovering the real interests of the previously mentioned fractions. They consist of excluding from the media market a competitor of press bodies affiliated to the two political parties. The declarations of Mr. Valeriu Reniță, the General Director of the Government Agency "Moldpres", as well as the owner of the private Press Agency "Basa-press," made on the PRO TV television channel in this respect are meaningful. "The good side is that it produces clarity on the market for press agencies. I would say there are too many press agencies". Thus he thanks the municipal counselors for liquidating his competitor. And the stake is not an economic one. In the new political conjuncture the influence spheres and media resources (as well as financial flows) are being redistributed among the governing parties. What cannot be subordinated is destroyed. This is a part of the struggle for the electorate and for power and these are again notions from the political arsenal.

We find one more proof of the political character of liquidation, and not the last one, in the tough refusal of the "liquidators" to accept the existence of the Agency in any form. After the liquidation of the public institution by a decision not discussed in advance, the liquidators formulated its "spin". The collaboration proposals on the basis of an information services project were categorically rejected. The private agency assigned itself partially public functions with services amounting to 300 000 lei annually offered to local authorities for free. Even the proposals to leave them the premises for payment like any other legal entity. If all the representatives of the liquidating fractions set us a trap and suggested that we urgently register the new Agency as a private legal entity, it was the second liquidation in the manner of the demimonde, which shoots its victim once more in order to be sure he is definitely dead – the so-called "controlling shoot". And after all that the leader of PPCD fraction in CMC Corduneanu declares peacefully on Free Europe on the program from August 9 that "we did not liquidate "Info-Prim", we just retired as founders".

There existed also the third liquidation. At the official request of the new "Info-Prim Neo" Agency, submitted to CMC as the only decisional authority in the capital, we were offered the premises on Veronica Micle 10, where we worked for 7 years within our old organization. The municipal authorities, through

the answer signed by the vice-mayor Mihai Furtună encouraged us "to present to the General Director of Economy, Reforms and patrimonial Relationships of the Chișinău Municipal Council (Columna str., 106) documents confirming that our Agency is the assignee of the Municipal Press Agency "Info-Prim"!

Discrimination as a Tool of Promoting the "National Interest" or the Policy of Doubled Standards

The general context of the "Info-Prim Lesson" comprises the fact that a few days after the liquidation of the Agency, the Government of the Republic of Moldova liquidated the existing two state newspapers. Both the liquidating municipal counselors and their political leaders interpret the events as being equivalent. That is not true. First of all, the point of view of transforming the "Info-Prim" Agency into a public institution would be comparable only to the eventual transforming of the "Moldpres" State Agency into a public institution. But nothing is said about the latter. Secondly, the "Info-Prim" Municipal Press Agency was liquidated by a verbal decision, not included in the agenda of the meeting of the Chișinău Municipal Council (without any alternative decision regarding it) and not taking into account the information and social consequences. For government newspapers special decisions have been previously prepared. The liquidation of the previously mentioned press bodies with governmental status did not mean their disappearance. Even after the liquidation decision, they continue the same editorial policy of publishing official issues and promoting the government, the governing party and the state leaders. And in over half a year public opinion has not had access to the secret on the assets of the two publications, accumulated from public money for many decades. At the same time, the "Info-prim" Agency was liquidated definitively and irreversibly and the personnel were thrown out in the street. Thus the process of transforming a media outlet into a public institution reduces only to the liquidation of the few alternative sources in the Moldovan press. This is totally opposed to the promises of CPRM and CDPP of democratization of the Moldovan society, including ensuring a high degree of press freedom and pluralism.

Strong and Weak Points of the Moldovan Press

One more conclusion can be made from the "Info-Prim Lesson": the force of our press confronting political and other dangers can be only in its solidarity. Just two persuasive examples. If the "liquidators" did not attain their purpose definitively, it happened only because two professional associations of journalists offered their premises and resources for a certain period to the "Info-Prim Neo" Agency, created by the "Info-Prim" team. We thank them for this act of solidarity act and even for their courage. One more case. A professional colleague,

the owner of a press agency, was naively wondering how the new “Info-Prim Neo” Agency could pretend to have the status of an independent press body if it declares it is seeking initial financing to start the business. The sponsor will charge money, will decide the editorial policy. And then what kind of independence is that? How could he possibly forget that he also started his agency a few years ago by the support of foreign grants? That he used grants in order to build fashionable premises and extend his business? It is said he had serious trouble because those grants were used not according to their intended use. He was forgiven, because he showed to the foreigners a flag of the press that wants to be free and independent in the Republic of Moldova. He rather hoped that his media business would be further away from danger, if he flirted a little with the government. This government divides the press only into the subdued and the enemy, the latter of which should be liquidated. It takes pleasure from subduing the voluntarily subdued once more. My naïve colleague had the opportunity to convince himself about that from the example of a television channel, very close in business to the agency he runs. But a little later, he was flirting with the “Info-Prim” Agency. For the principle “divide and split” under the conditions of actual poverty of the Moldovan press, we can confirm only our solidarity, even if we are competitors in our professional lives. I hope this is because we have common objectives. Otherwise, everybody will have their turn to be liquidated under the pennant of the European integration.

Perspective Remedies Against Further Liquidations

In another time I would have offered one more solution. I would have said all this had not happened to the “Info-Prim” team or to anybody else, if the transformation of the state press into public institutions had been done according to a law that had protected us from discrimination and group interests. There are legal protections in democratic societies. But I can not say that because I have already mentioned the policy of double standards that the actual governors-liquidators made us grow accustomed to, as well as the Europeans, the Americans, and everybody else.

Appendix 1

“INFO-PRIM”: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA “FROM ORIGINS TO THE SECOND LIQUIDATION”

OFFICIAL CV

The Press Agency “Info-Prim”, subdivision of the Public Relations Department (PRD) of the Chisinau City Hall was founded on October 1, 1998 and operated for many years within the municipal press media-holding together with Antena C radio station, Euro TV – Chişinău, newspapers “Capitala” and “Capitala-Stoliţa”, “Capitala” magazine and Editorial-Printing

Center Chişinău-Prim. After the liquidation of PRD in April 2004 at the request of the Founder, the Chişinău Municipal Council (CMC), the Agency registered with the Ministry of Justice as a public institution, partially financed from the local budget. On May 17, 2005, the Chişinău Municipal Council decided to liquidate the Agency. By the decision of August 4, 2005, the CMC rejected a collaboration project with the “Info-Prim Neo” Agency, founded by the team of the former agency, not giving them the right to operate in the same building.

FIODOR NEGRU 1, leader of CPRM fraction in CMC, (24.05.2005): *“Press Agency „Info-Prim” can be transformed into a legal entity with private capital and CMC can collaborate with it on an agreement basis. The reformed agency should offer a cooperation program to the Council that could be accepted and financed by CMC. Negru has mentioned that CMC could put at the agency’s disposal the assets that were administrated by “Info-Prim” before its liquidation as a public institution.*

FIODOR NEGRU 2, CMC meeting, 07.06.05: *“I propose not to accept in the meeting’s agenda the issue on collaboration conditions of CMC with the “Info-Prim Neo” Press Agency, which needs additional examination”.*

FIODOR NEGRU 3, 04.08.2005: *“CMC should reject the collaboration project with “Info-Prim Neo” in order not to prioritize a certain legal entity.”.*

ALEXANDRU CORDUNEANU 1, of the CDPP in CMC, 24.05.2005: *““CMC cannot forbid the agency’s team to found it in another organizational form and later on establish a collaboration with the Council. CMC can rent the building and the technical equipment to the agency on the basis of an agreement”.*

ALEXANDRU CORDUNEANU 2, 04.08.2005: *“I propose to reject the decision bill on collaboration with “Info-Prim Neo” and a contest of projects to be announced in this context”.*

MIHAI ROŞCOVAN 1, CDPP counselor, president of the CMC meeting, when liquidation of the Agency was voted, at Antena C radio station, on 29.05.2005: *“The CDPP fraction voted always against the “Info-Prim” agency since its foundation, because the press should not be financed from the state budget. Thus, on May 17, the CDPP counselors did not vote with the Communists, but the Communists joined the Christian-Democrats. If we request the transformation into public institutions of “Moldova Suverana” and “Nezavisimaia Moldova”, why is it not correct to apply the same thing to “Info-Prim” agency? We offered the right to privatize this agency to the “Info-Prim” team. I think Mr.Urecheanu and Mr. Braghîş have enough money to do that”.*

MIHAI ROŞCOVAN 2, independent counselor after his exclusion from CDPP, CMC meeting of 04.08.2005: *““I propose to make a decision, so that the Agency is renting the building. The collaboration projects with local authorities ought to be examined later, with or without announcing a contest for more press bodies”.*

Vitalie Cazacu:

“The young do not come to the local press...”

(Vitalie Cazacu, Director of DECA-press Agency, answers the questions of “Mass Media in Moldova”)

1. Dear Mr. Cazacu, you have founded one of the first informational agencies outside Chisinau; how close or how far are you today from the objectives you set at the starting point?

I believe that, in general, we have achieved the goals we initially set for ourselves. To me, it's important that we exist, that we have clients and that we are one of the strongest mass media organizations outside Chisinau. Perhaps, we could have obtained much more, but this is the situation.

2. What kind of work conditions do you have today: favorable, not so much, better than they used to be, or worse?

Paradoxical as it may sound, the work conditions seem to have been preserved; they are practically the same as 8-9 years ago. I refer to the economic conditions, which are far from being favorable, everybody knows this. As for the rest, everything has been in motion, in development. But this has rather happened based on an evolution that is not related to the economy.

3. How do you solve the staff problem?

It's difficult to speak about this in two or three words; however, I wouldn't like to bore the people with explanations. I will stress only one thing: the Balti office of DECA-press has never had a staff problem. The team has been built along the way, logically and coherently. A problem has always been with the reporters from other territories. We have to say it directly – the young don't come to the local press, and this is one of the biggest obstacles to the development of mass media institutions in the provinces. Not to mention that

practically all graduates of journalism faculties remain in the capital and those who have come to the local press during the past years are very few.

4. Who are your clients (readers)? How do you maintain relations with them?

Our clients are mass media institutions, companies, embassies and local and foreign non-governmental organizations. However, their number is too small. Anyway, we have very good relations with our current clients and they are based on our mutual respect and on the clients' interest in our product.

5. Who are your competitors?

Another paradox is that we do not have competitors in what concerns the content of news bulletins. If Chisinau press agencies may release news on the same subjects, we issue information from the provinces, which other press agencies in general do not, and so, we provide information that clients can find only with us.

Generally speaking, we maintain friendly relations with Chisinau press agencies, and most of all with Basa-press and Reporter.md.

6. What impedes and what favors the development of press agencies in the Republic of Moldova?

The fact that there are too many of them both impedes and favors the development of press agencies.

It impedes – because the market is too small for so many press agencies. It favors – because, still, so many press agencies operate.

Nicolae POJOGA

The Commissars

(A Christmas tale for adults)

Shadows or Light

Light. But not “lights”, as the most primitive rules of composition would suggest. Light in the sense of cognition, of information in view of cognition. We are a sentimental people and this is the only thing we are left with every time fate tests

us. Any discussion (in more or less critical terms) about press photography will definitely fail into many abstract sentences about beauty, a category that will be, in its turn, designated intuitively and probably enthusiastically and euphemistically. More than our attempts of lowering (why not also “of raising”?) the debates about the said substance to an understandable level

we have encountered a disarming resistance both on behalf of journalists and critics. In other words, we are part of a totally unproductive exchange of words about documentarism, professional methods and ethics, and criticism. This is why we have the Christmas Tale, which is meant to calm down the spirits even before they ignite and start emitting smoke.

Black-white and white-black

It was the first and the most complete adventure of photography. As a suave interpretation of reality, black and white photography (in fact, purplish to violet-blue in the first pictures on the little silver plates dispersed by Daguer or almost Talbot's sepia) overcame with a technological speed the classical view of the dark room, an invention dating back almost to Leonardo's epoch and which, traditionally, reproduces the pictures in colors.

The French call black and white film¹ "noir". Simply black. Perhaps, for the simple reason that white does not even exist on the celluloid: the spots that dramatically designate snow and – melodramatically – the sublime of silk, are simply transparent. Thus, the cinema white will find itself on a piece of canvas or a whitewashed wall, surfaces on which the black and gray from the film will come alive. In photography, we are in black and white as long as the carrying white is offered by the newspaper paper, the computer monitor (attention: not always!) or on any other white spot. If we exclude the film slide, which by definition is transparent (and in no case is photography), white remains the key of the photograph. A kind of waiting for the appearance of black sheep in the developing liquid.

For over one hundred and fifty years, the real picture used to come up from waters summarily lighted by a red lamp. After all, the formal dispute between the concepts of shadows and lights can be taken to another cultural plane: the photographic negative, as being the first and the most reliable imprint of the throbbing (convulsion, if you want) of an event. Nothing is accidental in this life. The photographic negative (with all the semantic, semiotic and cultural implications and associations) could only have appeared in modern history. It is true, even though such a grammatical construction never existed. But it sounds nice.

Before the time ruled by fascination with the negative, the eye, in its position of veritable extension of the thought, fixed with stupor the veracity of the image upside down, as it appears in the techniques preceding the celluloid. Preceding photography. What was before that? Yes, of course, it was the magical box nicknamed the dark room: a box with a small infinitesimal hole on one of the faces. The artifact was able to capture a projection of the landscape in front of the drawer. A Renaissance person or a Bedouin serving the Pasha.

Photography fell as a snap on this lazy contemplation. With a different sensitivity, with other players, with an unprecedented technique. On the following day, from the very morning, humanity was already entitled to exclaim: This is a marvel!

What times, we would say, what universal cultural palette! Without any color, unstable pigment or expensive inks, it left space for feeling, the black and white of the picture and the text continuing to make even today the delight of the highest quality press. When converted for print, the photograph, or better to say, its image, is so transparent that words can be seen through it. "The mission of photography consists in the possibility of explaining some realities from person to person and from person to one's own Ego".²

Victims and Criminals

I have an unusual book in front of me. Its name is "The Commissar Vanishes"³. The British author, David King, collected Soviet photographs and posters (placards) over twenty years. The intrigue began when King, stupefied, concluded that Soviet documentary photography had permanently been retouched. In a way, of course. The party, the power and, not in the least, I.V. Stalin used to give directions for the removal of certain political figures from historic photographs representing the "Great October Revolution", multiple congresses, Internationales, etc. This extremely unpleasant thing was usually happening to those who could not object anymore in one way or another.

Top political figures, as well as leaders from the provinces (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin etc.), would first be exterminated physically, and then their iconographic "disappearance" would follow, a phenomenon hard to imagine in civilization. Follow the fate of some photographic images, the persons that were removed with the scissors, eraser, aerograph,⁴ or were simply covered with generously applied purple ink. The madness grew to a considerable size on the entire territory of the Stalinist Empire. Even primary school children were called to demonstrate vigilance by covering with ink the portraits of the "saint" Soviet MPs in full accordance with the latest news about the "people's enemies" listened to on the ubiquitous radio. Not to recall the poor librarians, artists, propaganda-makers, activists and bosses. The Criminal Code of that time was simply crushing the ordinary person for non-vigilance and – stupor! – for failure to turn in those close to them, who for one reason or another, failed to cover with ink the face of the leader freshly liquidated by the Central Committee. God forbid! The fever of retouching modern history had grown so much that, in only a few years, there were (integrally!) destroyed immense collections of photographs, documents, newspapers, magazines (including party ones) both from the ominous Soviet period,

1. Here – in the common meaning of "cinema".

2. Attributed to the famous Edward Steichen.

3. David King, *The Commissar Vanishes*, Metropolitan Books, first edition 1997.

4. A kind of *airbrush*, first-hand tool used in various computer applications for handling images.

and from that of the late Russian Empire. Nothing! “Nichego!” Only isolated works survived, which were carried away in the suitcases of the few knowledgeable emigrants.

I have evoked here the entire story of “the vanished ones” only because of the grief that follows us at a simple contemplation of photographs from the Moldovan periodical press. What “aerograph”, Mister! Contemporary guys have laid hands on a tool that Josef’s retouchers did not even dream about.⁵ I have examined on many occasions the spectrum of manipulations used in our country. Having applied the above-mentioned “commissar” method at the highest level, drawing donkey horns and ears etc., our guys have adjusted an entire industry of – attention! – appearance of “commissars”. Thus, we often delight in pictures in which there appear (chic!) faces that were not there. To put it simpler: if Venturiano⁶ decides to criticize a supposed X-Y alliance or a triple X,Y,Z convention, you will definitely see in the newspaper a picture of all three or four of them. I once witnessed the evocation of some saints who had faded a long time ago, such as Marx and Engels⁷. The method is called monster coalition. Examples of such can easily be found in any of our newspapers.

I would like to render homage here to the one who was Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908 - 2004)⁸, the artist named “The-best-among-us” back when he was still alive. He had two stamps, which he put on the back of photographs sent for print. One named “About Beauty” asked the possible editors not to interfere at all with the original picture, and the other one, “About Truth”, requested both a correct usage of the author’s text and an adequate context for the picture. “Intensive use of photography in mass media resides in an increased responsibility on behalf of the photojournalist... We must remember that we are not allowed to separate ourselves from the real world and from humanity in general.”

Further (for dessert), one more quote from Cartier-Bresson. Something that vaguely reminds us about the commissar story⁹:

“We, the photographers, always have to deal with things that permanently vanish. Once vanished, there are no forces or inventions on the entire Earth that can bring them back. We are not capable of developing¹⁰ and of printing out the act of memory...”¹¹



In the picture:

“Icarus’ Fall”¹²

by Pieter Bruegel
(the Elder)

Oil, canvas 73.5 x 112
cm, Royaux des Beaux-
Arts Museum, Brussels
<[http://gallery.euroweb.
hu/html/b/bruegel/
pieter_e/painting/icarus.
html](http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/b/bruegel/pieter_e/painting/icarus.html)>

5. It is true that Photoshop, one of the most sophisticated modern tools, was created exclusively for transformation and editing of pictures.

6. See “jornalistica” from “A stormy night” by I.L. Caragiale.

7. Examples “taken from life”, as Pavel Stratan says....

8. Better later than never for the person we all loved and admired.

9. Big surprise: Michael Nyman, one of the most popular modern composers, “astounded by the ingrateful history re-writing work, undertaken by Stalin”, decided to re-write integrally the music for the ballet “Icarus’ Fall”, the entire work being called from now on “The Commissar Leaves”. If some dared to re-write the History, why wouldn’t I have the right to review my own musical compositions, Nyman says.

10. In the photographic sense, of course..

11. Quote from “French Photographer 1908 - 2004”.

12. Icarus The Brave, the man who wanted to fly, can be found on the canvas of the brilliant Bruegel with certain difficulty. The flyer simply vanishes. (See right bottom of the composition).

Larisa UNGUREANU

A few considerations about culture journalism

Are our readers aware of the fact that we have culture journalism? Are there such publications known and requested by the readers? These are the first questions I asked myself before conducting this study.

Approaching the news-stands selling newspapers and magazines in Chisinau, I asked several saleswomen the same question: "Do you have publications featuring culture?" "???" I simplified the question a little: "Do you have a cultural newspaper or magazine?" "We don't have anything in Romanian!" "It cannot be! How about *"Literatura și Arta"*? How about *"Contrafort"*? How about..." The saleswomen smiled broadly here as if having guessed the answer to a question from a prize contest. "We do have them! Of course we do! We receive *"Literatura și Arta"* every Thursday, and *"Contrafort"* from time to time. Here, the latest issue came these days!" (That was issue no. 9-10/2005 – author's note) "And magazines? *"Semn"*, for example. *"Sud-Est"* or *"Viața Basarabiei"*? "No-o-o! We don't have those!" Some saleswomen, with a longer length of service, remembered how the readers could admire the magazine *"Sud-Est"* in the stand windows a few years ago, but for some time now "it either does not come out, or it sells at other news-stands, we don't know". Sadder is the situation with *"Semn"* magazine, which probably does not even reach Chisinau news-stands. And, to my great surprise, nor the libraries, at least, not the ones I visit more often: *"Târgoviște"*, *"Alba Iulia"*, *"Maramureș"*, etc. If *"Sud-Est cultural"*, not to mention *"Literatura și Arta"*, *"Contrafort"* can be read in libraries, the librarians I asked had never heard about the Balti (and Drochia) magazine *"Semn"*.

I set out to conduct below a study of the cultural publications existing in the Republic of Moldova, which would provide both a brief history of each publication, and an analysis of the communication means with the reader and the size of the cultural space covered by the publications.

"Viața Basarabiei", a magazine published at present by the Union of Writers of Moldova (Director – Mihai Cimpoi), was founded in 1932, under the guidance of Pan Halippa and Nicolai Costenco. In the Soviet times, the issuance of the newspaper was, obviously, suspended. Decades would pass until *"Viața Basarabiei"* would reappear in our cultural life. No. 1 issue (new series) came out in 2001 with the support of the Romanian Cultural Institute, as announced in issue No. 3 (11) 2004. Only eleven issues appeared during those three years! Not a single magazine issue came out in 2005. Mr. Mihai

Cimpoi, whom I wanted to ask about the future, as well as about the present, of this publication, had gone "abroad", said the UW secretary. This did not satisfy my curiosity.

"Literatura și Arta", a weekly publication of the Moldovan writers (editor-in-chief – Nicolae Dabija), was founded on 3 October 1954 and has come out in already 3141 issues (latest issue No. 45 of 10 November 2005 – author's note). It was initially called *"Cultura"*, and from the 1970s – *"Literatura și Arta"*, the organ of the Ministry of Culture and Union of Writers. At the beginning of 1990s, the weekly became a publication of the Union of Writers. The print-run of *"LA"* varies from year to year. In 2004-2005, as we read on the last page (the 8th), the print-run is fixed: 19,620 copies. We find out on the same page that *"Literatura și Arta"* comes out in Chișinău each Thursday in Romanian, and that it has two subscription indexes, the second one being a privileged index (for pensioners, students and disabled). The price of the weekly is MDL 1.50, i.e. it is very cheap as compared to other cultural publications. *"Sud-Est cultural"*, for example, costs now MDL 33.00. It is true, the polygraphic look of these two publications differ. *"Literatura și Arta"* is printed on newspaper paper, it uses two colors, usually, red and black, in other years the preferred color being blue, and during the winter holidays – green. The weekly does not have a web version. We will write about *"Sud-Est cultural"* below.

"Semn" (editor-in-chief – Nicolae Leahu), a quarterly literary magazine, has its headquarters both in Balti and Drochia, and has come out since 1995. The first two issues were supported by the Soros Foundation- Moldova. Since 1997 *"Semn"* has had two editors: the Romanian Cultural Foundation and Semn S.R.L. Since 2002, the editor has remained Semn S.R.L., the magazine comes out with the support of the Romanian Cultural Foundation and the Soros Foundation-Moldova, and in 2003-2005 it was funded by the Romanian Cultural Institute. The number of pages varies between 60 and 64. The four-page difference is not so high as to influence the content of the magazine. The first two issues from this year, 2005, insert a Supplement of Romanian Language and Literature for gymnasiums and lyceums (p. 65-80). The magazine used to be printed in Balti, but it has been printed in Chisinau in the past years. The cover changes its color from issue to issue, which ensures its elegance, but also a certain sobriety. On the first page, we can read the names of the authors who sign the materials, including poetry, fiction and dramaturgy. Unfortunately, neither the print-run, nor the cost of an issue, are indicated. However, we find on page 3 of

the cover information about the subscription index in "Poșta Moldovei" Catalogue. The issue 1-2/2001 also indicates the URL: <http://ournet.md/~semm>. From the collection I have, it is the only issue attesting the magazine's web version. The 2003 and 2004 issues indicate only the e-mail.

"Sud-Est" – this is the initial name of the art, culture and civilization magazine (editor-in-chief – Valentina Tăzlăuanu), which has come out since the beginning of 1990s on a quarterly basis. The founder is the Ministry of Culture. It is "published by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova and the Romanian Cultural Foundation", as it says on the Summary page (No.2/1994) or, as we read on the cover on page 3, it comes out also with the support of the Soros Foundation- Moldova (No.2/1995). In the past years, the magazine's name has been "Sud-Est cultural" and it has had two editors: the Romanian Cultural Institute and "Sud-Est Cultural" S.R.L. In its first years of activity, "Sud-Est" also had an editorial board, which was later given up. The summary was published in three languages: Romanian, French and English; at present – in Romanian and English. In the first phase of activity, the magazine's volume was 96 pages, now it varies between 140-152-164 pages; the format, with slight changes, has remained the same. The magazine's polygraphic appearance, its "actors" preference for a special look should be mentioned, especially impressive cover, which presents art reproductions of Moldovan artists and sculptors. In some issues we also find reproductions inside accompanied by a short biography of the author. Before becoming a limited liability company (S.R.L.), "Sud-Est" was also cataloging its previous appearances. Thus, in 1995, for example, we find out that the magazine had its 20th issue. At present, this practice has disappeared. It should be mentioned that the publication has also a web version, which can be accessed at: <http://www.sud-est.md>.

"Contrafort" (Director – Vasile Gârneț, editor-in-chief – Vitalie Ciobanu), magazine of young Moldovan writers, came out in Chisinau in October 1994. Editors: Romanian Cultural Foundation and the "Phoenix-press" company; later the company changed its name to "Contrafort" S.R.L. In fact, as all the other cultural publications became Limited Liability Companies, too! A strange situation, but otherwise the Ministry of Justice does not register the "business" and the statute, "an unfair status of the press culture", as Vitalie Ciobanu put it. We also found out from the editor-in-chief that the publication's print-run reaches 1,600 copies, that 300 public libraries benefit from free subscriptions to "Contrafort" thanks to the Soros Foundation, that the editorial office has signed contracts with "Poșta Moldovei", "Moldpresa", "Omnia presa", so that the magazine can be sold in Chisinau news-stands and in other Moldovan localities, that the magazine can be bought in "Pro Noi" bookstores as well as in the editorial office, that the magazine is sent to Bucharest, to the Romanian Cultural Foundation (in the past years – Romanian Cultural Institute, which has further remained the editor of "Contrafort"), and

that they have subscribers in Romania and in other countries. Some readers access the magazine's site: <http://www.contrafort.md> (we learn this through the messages from the Café), but preference is given to the printed version. So, the "Contrafort" team does all they can to have their publication disseminated and read by as many people as possible. It should be mentioned that the first issues had 16 pages and used two colors: red and blue. The first page contained the editorial, as a rule, placed on the right, while the left side of the page would offer us a photographic image (old Chisinau, famous film directors etc.) or painting, water color and graphic reproductions. The most inciting titles of the stories and their signatories would be inserted below as well as the number of the page where they could be read. Magazine pages conceived this way resemble on-line editions, with a well-thought structure that is close to the mentality of the modern reader, especially of the young one, who cannot be attracted by just any kind of press. Along the way, the magazine's volume has increased from 24 to 32 pages; some issues are double. The look of the first page has also changed, the red and blue have disappeared, only black has remained. The price has also changed: from MDL 1 to 3. The editorial has moved from page 1 to page 3. The magazine has never had an editorial board, but it has a more or less constant team made up of associated editors. This is also the case of "Semn" magazine ("Sud-Est cultural", for example, prefers permanent authors).

Moldova was one of the few republics in the ex-Soviet space that did not have publications about film, music, plastic arts or architecture. The end of 1980s – beginning of 1990s played an edifying role for the cultural press. The seeds of some publications started to rise back in 1989-90 (for example, the supplement "Screen" in "Moldova" magazine), a "trial" issue of the publication "Lanterna Magică" of the Film Makers' Union (March 1991), which was launched on the occasion of FMU Plenary Meeting. The issue came out clandestinely, because the publication had neither a status nor the approval of the higher bodies, including of the Central Committee. In that period, the Communist Party was still ruling.

The periodical "Lanterna Magică" (founder – Film Makers' Union of Moldova) and the magazine "Sud-Est" (founder – Ministry of Culture and Cults) were registered almost at the same time with the State Department for publishing houses, polygraphy and book distribution of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, both of them being subsidized from the budget.

Unfortunately, the founders were often put in the situation of not keeping their promise, and so the respective publications desperately had to look for funds in order to survive. On top of it all, the Agrarian Parliament passed, in December 1995, the inconsiderate decision of transferring the cultural publications, including the Union of Writers' weekly "Literatura și Artă", to self-funding and self-management, which was a hard

blow on the “first wave” of cultural press. “Lanterna Magică” came out in printed form until 2000, but only as an on-line publication since then. It is still active thanks to the IATP program (website: www.iatp.md/LanternaMagica). The other publications: “Literatura și Artă”, “Sud-Est” – continue to come out in printed form.

Most Moldovan cultural magazines are financially supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute. The Moldovan state has not brought its contribution to the edification of a press that would actively participate in the implementation of some cultural policies and contribute to the process of continuous democratization of the society and European integration. This type of press, as other countries’ practice shows, cannot normally function without the state’s contribution, but the Moldovan state has not invested anything in cultural press in the last decade. This is what caused the abyss between cultural institutions, on the one hand, and cultural press, on the other hand, which mainly focuses on fiction, critique, and essay-writing. It reflects even less the theater, cinema, plastic arts, and music, these being presented only accidentally or not at all.

Which of the cultural institutions mentioned above (except for the site of “Lanterna Magică”), reflected the National Dramaturgy Festival, 2nd edition, or analyzed the agenda of the International

Documentary Film Festival “Cronograf”, 4th edition?! None! Thus, we get a false impression, I think, that these events are not so important for the cultural-artistic life in our country.

Cultural press, in fact, has created its own scope of communication with its audience. Some of these publications (“Semn”, “Sud-Est Cultural”) have cultivated a certain taste and aesthetics in their reader. If a connection exists among these publications, including “Contrafort”, as well as a way to communicate in a kind of literary circuit, then “Literatura și Artă” is absent from this chain. It is closer to “Viața Basarabiei”. I don’t think that this is about certain prejudices, but rather about belonging to communication practices that have become traditional. There is one common feature for all cultural publications. Each issue debates new books: literary, scientific, fiction, essays, historical, translations etc., which the reader practically cannot have either because they are expensive, or because they are missing from the bookstores, especially if it is about works published in Romania. It remains up to the cultural magazines themselves to review some of their objectives in order to get the reader even closer to the literary source, to promote artistic sensitivity, elevated taste, to cultivate freedom of speech and of thought as well as in order to reach the reader’s table in sufficient number.

Aneta GROSU

Chit-chatting with a news-stand

Chisinau has a few news-stands in almost each quarter, belonging to various press distributors. For some time now, the reporters from *Ziarul de Garda* start their mornings, euphemistically speaking, with direct dialogs with a news-stand. More seldom with the news-stand saleswomen, because, most of them, as a rule, neither speak, nor, at least, understand Romanian. From the inanimate news-stands we try to find out why the tens of newspaper titles, published in Russian, take the most attractive places on the shelves or why the piles of Russian newspapers cover the fresh newspapers published in Romanian.

The news-stands, of course, cannot speak, and so, our question further remains unanswered. However, where there is someone who can answer us, we permanently find out from them that, in our market conditions, everybody is interested in selling the goods that people buy. You cannot reply to this because you understand that the news-stand salespeople, just like the reporters, want to feed their children.

According to some data, the number of Moldovan citizens who prefer to subscribe or buy newspapers is

extremely limited. Some sources even announce a ridiculous figure, of about 100 thousand newspaper readers. These, except for some dignitaries who observe, from inertia, the newspaper buying fashion, choose one or, at the most, two newspaper titles in which they invest their money. In addition, especially in the past years, since our intelligentsia has been taking care of the Italian elderly, the number of national press readers has been constantly decreasing, and the efforts of some publications to extend their coverage abroad are useless. At this point, the calculations get even more complicated, in disfavor of Romanian language press. As a rule, the same number of readers crowd for the same titles of the most popular national publications, preferring to buy one newspaper, although they would read more.

Distributors

Although the press distributors officially cooperate with all publications that are officially registered in the Republic of Moldova, since 2001, that is, since the CPRM (Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova) came to governance, the problem of an alternative distribution

network has becoming increasingly topical. High utility prices, reticence about independent publications that, through their messages, come in opposition with the current governance, the refusal to sell more newspapers where they do not reach and the difficulties with which they accept to distribute more newspapers in the rural areas – these are just a few elements which should finally determine our press creators to open an independent distribution network. “It’s expensive, it’s difficult, it’s hard, it’s impossible” – say those who could try. The statements are made after exact economic calculations of such an eventual business have been made. This desperate conclusion could be true, in the conditions in which the current monopolists are supported by the power, as is the said-to-be-public TV Company Moldova 1 or the two governmental publications, skillfully and falsely transformed into independent publications.

Promotion

Those who produce Romanian language press in the Republic of Moldova say that an independent newspaper needs about three years to surpass the fight-for-survival stage, reaching a relatively constant stability. Often, and it is true, the newspapers that manage harder to impose themselves on the market are reproached for conducting an insufficient promotion policy. Things, however, are not so simple here, or, the TV being the most efficient method of promotion, an independent Romanian language newspaper does not have too much choice in Chisinau. The only station with national coverage is Moldova 1 – with exorbitant prices for publicity and with questionable “quality” audience that is less favorable to some independent publications. And the installation of street billboards costs thousands of dollars

– an unfilled dream for Romanian-language newspapers in the Republic of Moldova.

“Go to villages, find your readers”, say those who have a different point of view about the process of promotion of independent publications. And so, as it is known, it’s worth trying, and you start out, in order to get even more disappointed shortly. The potential readers are those who lost their jobs in the Republic of Moldova a long time ago, and that is why they have flooded the markets. They sell, without knowing what, and buy even less.

Illiterates

Thus, you try, in the crowded markets, to talk to people about the press and about their need to be anchored in the present time. In vain! “We do not read Latin!” – you will hear one of the saddest possible statements, uttered since 1990 to nowadays, a period in which we have managed to become so poor, that we do not even name correctly the language for which we fought. We are becoming a country of illiterates with the most faculties and universities in Europe per capita. Not even the young, including those from the journalism faculties, are too fond of reading the press, naively thinking that one can come to journalism with a few-word vocabulary and inadequately used phraseological expressions. In such circumstances, you come to being unable to conclude whose tragedy is bigger: those who produce newspapers in Romanian, or those who have no idea that these newspapers are made for them.

Somebody concluded that Romanian language press in the Republic of Moldova is not and still cannot be a business, but it is rather a matter of resistance. In the above-mentioned conditions, these *pieces de resistance* need many trivets on which to support their independence.